

Letters of an American Airman

Being the War Record of Capt. Hamilton
Coolidge, U.S.A., 1917-1918



HAMILTON COOLIDGE



LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN AIRMAN

BEING THE WAR RECORD OF
CAPT. HAMILTON COOLIDGE, U.S.A.

1917-1918



BOSTON

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1919

HAMILTON COOLIDGE

Born in Brookline, September 1, 1895.
Entered Groton School, September, 1908.
Senior Prefect, captain of the football eleven, and pitcher on the baseball nine, 1914-1915.
Graduated from Groton, June, 1915.
At Plattsburg training camp, Summer of 1915.
Entered Harvard (Class of '19), September, 1915.
Vice-president of the Freshman Class.
On the Freshman football and baseball teams.
At Curtiss Aviation School at Buffalo, Summer of 1916.
Varsity football squad, 1916.
Left College after Mid-years, February, 1917.
Enlisted in the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps at Key West, Fla., March 1, 1917.
Assigned to flying school at Miami, Fla.
Graduated in July and sent to first ground school at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
Sailed overseas, July 23, 1917.
In Paris, assigned to special duty in organizing American schools of aviation, August and September.
Commissioned as First Lieutenant, September 29, 1917.
Assigned to 3rd American Instruction Centre (Issoudun) and became tester of planes at Field No. 7.
Assigned to American Detachment, "Aviation Française, Division Spad" at Chartres, June 7, 1918.
Detached from French Aviation and joined the 94th Aero Squadron, U. S. A., First Pursuit Group, at the front, June 16.
Region of Chateau Thierry, brought down his first enemy plane, a Rumpler, July 7.
A Bi-place Halberstadt, north of Souilly, October 2.
A Balloon, a Fokker, and a Bi-place L. V. G. in one hour, near Dun-sur-Meuse, October 3.
A Balloon near Grand Pré, October 5.
A Fokker, October 8.
A Balloon over Buzancy, October 13.
Promoted to a Captaincy, October 3.
Leading his Flight, he was killed in action near Grand Pré, brought down by a direct hit of a German anti-aircraft battery, October 27, 1918.

Sunday, November 10, 1918

MY DEAR MR. COOLIDGE,

Though I have never met either of you, I want to tell you and Mrs. Coolidge how awfully sorry I am for you at this time. I was with Ham at Tecb in the first ground school squadron and knew him fairly well. We crossed together and later shared hotel and pension experiences in Paris. Subsequently I saw him at odd times in Issoudun. No need to tell you what an altogether wonderful person we all thought him. He was so easily the star of our little crowd of ten from Tecb — with his gorgeous wholesome body, his full round laugh, his vivid enthusiasm, his keen, sensitive enjoyment of mere living, his kindness and his purity.

Any attempt at consolation would be impertinent. I want you to know what he knew, however, that his part in the war was worth a thousand-fold the sacrifice he made. . . . Those months in France were packed with an essence of life, a quality of existence, worth centuries of living, though we realize it only in retrospect. The incalculably dear deaths which have come to some of them were the destiny of all of us — the most glorious that ever fell

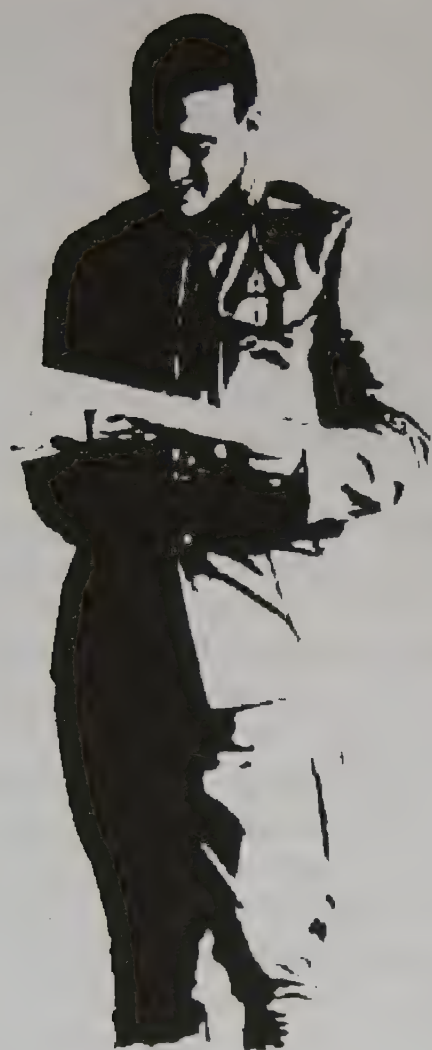
to youth — and in all sincerity, those of us who remain have missed our calling. They are merged in the greatest spiritual tradition the world has known since Christ, in the highest and most immortal of all adventures — and they accepted it with the finest freest gesture that was ever offered by youth.

I wish I could express what I feel about Ham. I can't. But believe me in this: — He is to be missed — how poignantly by you I know I cannot realize — but not regretted. He is above regret.

Faithfully yours,

WALKER M. ELLIS

Captain, Air Service



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Oyster Bay, July 22, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

One last, very loving "au revoir"! We've been staying on, these two days, getting equipped amid great confusion, so I've had a chance to see both the Davisons and these dear people here, — and you can well imagine that it stirs one's feelings enormously to be in such very patriotic, very *American* homes before going. They are both so intimately connected with the war and our Government that it does get one into the spirit of things. Q. sails on the same boat, and he is a first Lieutenant! I travel steerage (because the old commission hasn't arrived) with the contingents from the six Government schools: Tech., Cornell, Ohio, Berkeley, Cal., Texas and Illinois. I am acting first Sergeant in charge of them on account of my seniority in the service,

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and it has been a frightful job getting equipped and doing all kinds of jobs I've never been used to. Our officers are perfect corkers. I'm as cheerful as can be, and its all so wonderful.

Your loving

H.

DEAREST MOTHER,

Here I am safe and sound in England after a rather tiresome voyage which had much that was interesting in it too. It was great to see our escort arrive out of nowhere it seemed. First, all we could see were brilliant little flashes of light on the horizon, and hardly two minutes later we could make out the forms of the tiny destroyers, tearing through the sea towards us. We all felt quite relieved. I wasn't sick! in spite of two days of quite rough weather.

Your loving son,

H.

*On Active Service with the American Expeditionary
Force, Aug. 15, 1917*

DEAREST MOTHER,

Here I am in Paris! and herewith is a very brief outline of the news: shall not fly for many weeks, as there is enormous organization to be

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effected first. With Douglas Campbell (Technology) I am to work under Capt. Miller and it seems now that we are to be in complete charge of organizing a large new American flying school here at ——! It will have by Oct., we hope, thirty-three times as many students as the place where I went to school!

We understand that our job will be to perfect a system and get it running, learning to fly on the side; then we shall be released to go to the front as squadron commanders. It is a job so overwhelming and we are so inexperienced that I can hardly believe it all, but as Maj. Bolling said today, America cannot possibly be effective at the front until she has perfected her organization back of the front. We are the first "aviators" here apparently, or the only ones available for such duty, so they've given us the job. Please say only this to people outside the immediate family: "He is on special duty connected with the organization of new schools in France." Also, I must make allowances, since this is the first we've heard and things are so apt to change before they materialize; so if you should hear from me tomorrow that I am a private washing dishes at the Caserne Neuilly don't be too surprised!

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Of course, we are disappointed at not flying at once, but we have been assured that we will fly as soon as it is possible. Also it is consoling to know that this is the thing *most* needed now, and that I am really being of more value to my country this way. All but ten of our crowd went off to a flying school this morning. We ten will be divided into groups of two or three and assigned to special duty in different places under different officers. It's a job of unlimited possibilities, and affording a chance for an infinite number of human qualities with which I am very meagerly equipped, but we've just got to rise to the occasion and do our *damnedest*!

My French is improving quite fast, but it has a long way to go! Now I am just able to get what I need at stores, restaurants, etc., and inquire my way about the city.

Paris is wonderful, but so is England from what we could gather from the train. I was enormously impressed with the neatness of everything and the charm of the little country farm-houses, always of brick, and in good repair. The hedges everywhere were a great surprise.

Your
HAM.

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France [Paris]

Aug. 19th, 1917

DEAREST LU,

Yesterday I had a fine chance to see some of the country when we took a long motor trip to the scene of our work. I've never seen anything quite so fascinating as the little farmhouses, all of stone and stucco, along the way. Then, too, every one of the little towns we passed has a history, which, in most cases, I know nothing of, but could feel in the atmosphere. One town I was particularly impressed with was the home of the most famous woman in the country's history.

Perhaps mother told you that for the present I am not on flying duty but am assigned to work with one of our officers and a colleague, D. C., on organization of one of our flying schools here. The job is almost overwhelming on the face of it, and particularly so to such green men as we, but we are the first people here and they simply had to use us. About ten of us were selected for jobs of a similar nature; the rest have gone to a French flying school. Never have I seen so many new and strange and wonderful things as in the past two weeks. My job entails considerable travel-

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ling, usually with officers, and seeing all kinds of officials, mostly French. Fortunately I haven't yet been confronted with a situation where I personally had to interview an important man on important business in *French*, but it surely is bound to come! I wish you could hear me talking French! I know enough to enquire my way, and get something to eat (usually not what I want, though), but *conversationally* I am a mess! Hands and eyebrows help enormously, but they are of no avail over the telephone. Well, you can just picture me, trying to explain to some French official a message from my C. O., and then trying to understand his answer getting all the little technicalities straight. Mr. R., je suis très fâché que je ne vous m'appreniez le français — (remorseful reminiscence). We have a very business-like, luxurious office in the Air Service Headquarters, but the office doesn't always make the man. We had an air raid alarm the other night, but were too sleepy to get out of bed; also we later discovered that they never got nearer than fifty miles or so. Must stop now, with *best* love and thanks.

Your affectionate brother,

HAM.

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[*Paris*] Sunday, Sept. 9, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

The week has been quite full of interest. It started out by the solution of some of our most difficult questions connected with the new American Flying School. We found sources of both castor oil and gasoline, and closed contracts for both at terrible prices, but we had been previously assured by the French government that it would be impossible to obtain either here. Other difficulties are in a fair way of solution too, so we are quite cheered up. At last our commissions have been approved by the board here and are going through the necessary channels involving communications with Washington.

Friday was an immense day. We motored out in the afternoon to an enormous aerodrome not far out, where the French government tests out their air planes. We saw the hangars which have been lent to us to house eight airplanes on which our officers are to fly. I am to be in charge of the mechanics there and will probably live near the field, returning frequently to the place, because it is only half or three quarters of an hour's ride. I shall have some real flying if all goes well. After seeing our own hangars we went on a sight

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seeing tour of the field. On two sides of it were hangars that extended probably two thirds of a mile each way. Here and there were airplanes standing idle, starting up or landing; airplanes of every type from the tiny Nieuports to the largest bombing planes. We were all anxious to see the Nieuports and Spads that are so famous for their great speed. We hadn't long to wait, for right near us a pilot clambered into one of the idle machines and started off. He got off in a twinkling and pointed his machine right up into the sky, circling upwards. He soon levelled off, cut a few circles, and came whizzing down; it was a *sight*. The little thing looks like a toy, but its motor has the roar of a battery of heavy guns.

We went on from hangar to hangar, seeing things at every step that I never believed existed this side of the land of Dreams. Outside one machine after another was taking the air or alighting. We saw a Spad come by close to the ground with motor wide open. Honestly it strained one's eyes to follow it. Well, we had to leave, but that didn't end my day. I went to dinner at Aunt Helen's where I met Col. Bolling, Maj. and Mrs. Scott, our cousin Col. Kean and a Marquise de something, but not much! Mrs.

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Scott is a dear and has undertaken to be my godmother when Aunt Helen leaves. It is very nice of her but she will have to go some to equal the Aunt and Uncle. It was a great party.

Every Saturday night we dine out somewhere, just for a change of diet, and then go to the excellent Cinema de Colisée which I think I have already described. We see mostly good American films, the Hearst-Pathé weekly, and wonderful war pictures showing action in front line trenches, tanks, and airplanes.

Last week's Hearst-Pathé showed little patrol boats in Boston Harbor, — great excitement!

Today I went out to see an injured classmate at the American Ambulance Hospital. He has been in ambulance work, and was wounded by a bomb dropped from the skies.

On the way back I stopped at one of the incomparable little patisseries and just gorged on cakes of all kinds. We all seem to suffer from hunger. The meals ought to be enough for any human being, but we must be a set of gourmands, for we all have to supplement our regular meals with cakes and sweets.

No letters have come for ages, but it must be on account of the boats. Anyway, *do keep writ-*

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ing, and occasionally send sweet chocolate carefully packed, as we surely shall be at some camp by the time any answers arrive.

Love to all,
HAM.

[Paris] Sept. 16, 1917

DEAR LU,

Last week was a busy one and very interesting, because it involved daily trips to a huge French aerodrome where they are testing and developing the very latest planes. I saw with mine own two eyes, a tiny machine travelling a hundred and forty-three miles an hour. But it's fierce being a mere spectator. Q. R. appeared yesterday and we had a good chance to dine and talk things over before he had to go back. Our new school is progressing wonderfully in spite of the awful difficulty of getting supplies of any nature, and I think it will be ready on time. Q. has been supply officer there and was doing great work until a flaw in his motorcycle frame landed him on one eye in a ditch. He was perfectly cheerful about it and seems to take such things as casually as a successful ride! His eye was practically O.K. when I saw him. Oh, I forgot to tell you about

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the movies last night. I was sitting there with Wally Trumbull when they turned on a scene of the king and queen reviewing U. S. troops at a camp in England. Suddenly Wally appeared chatting casually with the king as they emerged from a Y. M. C. A. tent in which W. had been inspecting! He nearly fell over when he saw it!

Well, you dear old thing, best luck all around, and much gratitude from your homesick, good-for-nothing brother,

HAM.

[*Paris*] Sunday Sept. 23, 1917

DEAREST MAMMY,

I look forward to Sundays particularly because it gives me a chance to get a broader outlook on all the tremendous goings-on. All the week long I am a mere cog in a wheel that represents only one branch of the preparations of only one country, so the point of view is obviously narrow. On Sundays I get hold of all the American papers and read up the news from every angle; it's mighty refreshing to have one whole day in which to find out what the rest of the world is doing.

Just now I've been reading with great interest about the food control in the U. S., the coal sup-

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ply, the flour prices, the great encampments of draft armies, the new flying schools, and the enormous factories that are building airplanes — and then I compare all this with what I know of similar things here.

Take coal, for instance. Only yesterday I saw a crowd of children and old women following a coal cart with bags and baskets. Every time the cart bumped a few lumps would fall into the street and a scramble ensued for the precious stuff. Coal is delivered to the houses not in great trucks as in the U. S., but in little hand push carts, and then unloaded in little bags. Only once a week is it possible to get hot water for a bath or shave. In the country you see poor tottering old women gathering anything in the form of wood; mere twigs, bushes, an occasional branch or perhaps a board or two — anything that will burn.

Sugar is priceless almost. You do get it for coffee but they bring in one or two lumps on a plate, or perhaps a basin with a few spoonfuls. They use it very sparingly in the food. You buy chocolate for thirty cents a cake, and gateaux at two or three for a franc.

Most of the meat you don't recognize unless

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it be veal which seems fairly plentiful, and two days a week, as you know, are meatless.

People do without some things entirely, of course, but generally it is just a question of *strict economy* and high prices. The other day I saw a woman grinding coffee in the door of her grocery shop. The coffee grinder had a little gas engine to turn it, but still she was grinding by hand. My curiosity being aroused, I asked her if I might look at the engine which, she said pathetically, had not run since her *patron* had left for the war. I fussed with it for nearly an hour but finally discovered that the gas pressure was too weak to run it and anyway her gas allowance would probably be insufficient to grind all her coffee even if the pressure were as strong as it used to be. In the airplane factories I've seen, and even on the grounds, large numbers of women are working.

In the *Transcript* for Sept. 1, which I've just been reading, I saw a column about our huge flying school here in France. I've seen every stage in its development and have had a very modest share in the work. In the same paper is an article advocating the manufacture in America, of enormous airplanes such as the Italians use.

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I doubt if anyone over there realizes how large or how effective these machines are.

I talked with a man who rode over the Alps in one for several hours. Then too, I saw over Paris a machine of much the same pattern driven by eight hundred horse power engines.

Friday a boy came up with the message that Maj. — wished to see me! I couldn't think what I was going to get called down for, but walked bravely in and discovered that said Maj. was one of our old Longwood friends! One of the best, too, and I can tell you it was good to talk things over with him. He gave me much good advice, and was particularly comforting on the subject of not flying which was quite a blow at first. Frank made me feel sorry that I'd ever peeped about it!

I work with two other boys assisting Capt. — in the organization of the new school. This assistance varies anywhere from doing errands down town to making out skeleton organization plans, and lists of all supplies needed. Lately we have spent much of our time at V — where we own eight planes for the use of the officers. Doug and I have been ordering tools and arranging for meals, payment, etc., of the men who stay there

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in charge of the planes. I have told you, I think, that these machines are housed on a huge French testing field where every conceivable form of flying thing may be seen at almost any hour of the day. It's interesting seeing them even if I can't fly.

The Aunt called up yesterday noon saying that an English friend had just sent her some grouse, and would Doug Campbell and I come to lunch?

Entertainment isn't lacking by a long shot. Dinners, theatres, movies and long walks have kept things cheerful at all times. The Freddie Allens have a house here, and I've dined there with Julian and his sister Barbara. Friends from college are appearing almost every day. Thursday night Cousin Arthur and Sher and I went on a whopping party. Every Saturday night we all go together to the movies — invariably good and usually showing American pictures.

Just after church this morning I met Wally Trumbull who has just come back from Y—— where he witnessed two days of the most terrific bombarding they have had in that section for *two years!* He walked in among the batteries in action; saw the airplanes directing their fire from above; looked right down at the trenches from M—— Ridge. He talked with men and walking

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wounded coming out of the trenches and was continually in the zone of the heavy shell fire for two days. As he went away in an auto, a "saucisse" or observation balloon was exploded above, and he saw the observer come down on a parachute and land safely in a tree beside the road. He saw *everything* and was the most interesting talker you ever heard!

Best love,
HAM.

[Paris] Sunday, Sept. 30, 1917

DEAREST P. A.,

We leave here perhaps Friday for the new American Flying School, about which you must have heard in the *Transcript* for Sept. 1.

It is due to open very soon, and of course involves a lot of work and supervision. Probably our job will be erecting *besson aux hangars*. We shall certainly do it ourselves if we can't get enough prisoner labor.

I am willing to say that the office has been a great experience for me, even in the capacity of office boy. I have had to learn a lot of French in a short time, and have had a good opportunity to see and assist in business transactions on a large

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scale. We expect to encounter many difficulties and some hardships down there. The mud will seriously affect our motor transportation and our fuel will at best be barely sufficient to combat the cold, damp weather. There are other difficulties connected with our supplies but I shall never believe there isn't a way after having seen the school develop from a mere site to an effective training school in six weeks or perhaps seven.

I wish you could have been with me at sunset yesterday, when I saw a huge four-motored, triplane flying over Paris and back to the field. I may be a dreamer of dreams, but it took little imagination to picture just such a craft taking our whole family, and Lu's whole family to Squam in less than an hour. May you live to see the day!

I am going out to walk and see some more of this beautiful city.

Your loving,
HAM.

[Paris] France
Oct. 4th, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

Your good letter came a few days ago, describing your ubiquitousness, and I may say it

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sent a shiver through me to think of how you are going it; why, nothing would cheer me up more than to have some of your overwhelming work, for I might as well tell you that my occupations seem spasmodic and uncertain. I've just finished a technical translation that has left me exhausted, but it's a hard job finished, and there's always a satisfaction in that. This is one of the last letters you will get from me here, as early next week we move down to our new school. It's soon going to be cold and damp there; there will be little heat and little water, and we shall live in barracks or tents, but it is our own school at last, and we shall be there to see it open and develop into the world's largest quite rapidly if all goes well.

I wish you could have looked in on us at our hotel last evening. We had received our discharges from the army and were, for the time being, civilians. Doug Campbell played the piano and an Englishman friend whom we have come to know at meals in the hotel provided two large bottles of port for the occasion to celebrate the arrival of our commissions as first lieutenants. It was a very jolly party, and our host (the Englishman) was perfectly fine. He has just lost his only son, but is wonderfully brave and resigned

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about it, and seemed awfully pleased to be with boys again. He toasted us as U. S. officers, adding some well chosen words of cordiality, and we in turn toasted our host and his country. After the party we eight marched down the street in military formation, did "by the left flank" at the corner, and straight into headquarters to take the oath of office.

Oct. 5 th. Eddie Bates and I got up early to fly at V—— but found it too windy when we arrived. You see now that we are officers we have a right to use the officers' machines at the big field I have already described just a little way outside the city.

All of our ten, excepting D. C., E. B. and me are being sent to —— to take charge of various groups of flying students. They wanted us, too, but Capt. Miller said he wanted to have us stay with him to help him run the flying school here. It's the new American one I have mentioned so often and the location of which you may have read in American newspapers.

This afternoon I hope to fly if the weather is good, and so I'll have to finish this rambling letter later ——

It's a mean rainy afternoon so our flying will

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be once more postponed. Of course, when we couldn't fly there was an uninterrupted stretch of perfect weather. Well, we ought to get plenty down at the new school when that starts. I've been splurging right and left buying heavy trou, underclo, socks, trench boots, and such like, to be as comfortable as possible in the hard winter we anticipate at the school. The Government furnishes great eskimo suits for flying, thank goodness. I shall miss this wonderful city. There are so many characteristic things about it that appeal to me enormously: the houses with their French windows and their balconies, the wonderful broad streets, the huge loaves of bread walking through the streets as it were, the ancient painters, carpenters, stone-cutters, street-cleaners, invariably attired in those striking blue chemise effects (something characteristically French to me), the Sunday afternoon walks in the Bois, similar promenades in the Latin quarter, our weekly Saturday night "movie" party, and last and most of all the "open house" of certain near relatives!

The rain has stopped. With a little luck I may get a "hop" with the instructor this afternoon. It will be necessary to go with him a

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while to get used to the stick control or *manche à balai* as they term it here, and certain inherent differences between the Nieuport and the old Curtiss.

Bestest love,
H.

[Paris] Sunday, Oct. 6(?)

DEAR LU,

You wouldn't know your little brother if you saw him in the street, — swank uniform, Sam Brown belt with shoulder strap and brass trimmings, gold and black hat, coat, and immaculate shine on belt and leggings and shoes. Aunt Helen has been showing me a *time*; teas, lunch parties, dinners, and I've met some nice people, friends of hers, who all offer standing invitations, so I ought to be well fixed even after she has gone.

Last night I went to a French dinner-party. It was terrific as I sat next the daughter who speaks not a word of English! Well, I wasn't going to worry about a thing like that, and so plugged ahead with a steady line of Franco-American. I understood most of what she said but was a little bewildered when she

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said "êtes-vous engagé?" "Non," I said, "Pas encore, mais après la guerre j'essayerai encore" — puzzled expression on lady's face — and I, thinking to clear up the situation, explained, "Je n'avais pas de chance, mais peut être vous pouvez me dire comment l'accomplir." — Further expression of doubt, and I had about decided to give up when an English-speaking friend told me that "engagé" meant *enlisted* in the army! I nearly passed out. Today I lunched at the T's., once of Boston. It has all been good fun but naturally I'm keen to get down to our school where we shall get some flying for a change and live a good old out door life. From now on life ought to be pretty interesting for a change, as I never did enthuse over office work. We are going to help out our C. O. in the administration of the school, but goodness knows in what particular way. We are our own censors now, I believe, but of course in honor bound to say nothing we couldn't have said before.

Best love, you old dear, and my regards to that young niece! Will write soon from the school *tout de suite*.

Love,
H.

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[Issoudun] Somewhere in France

Oct. 10, 1917

DEAREST MAMMY,

. . . I've been a very busy man lately as you may have gathered. First of all our commissions arrived a week ago, then we had to finish up our work in the office preparatory to moving down to the school. . . . I went to dinners, lunches, etc., at a wild rate. . . . Then Monday morning Doug Campbell and I took the train for here with a French Capt. P., our head *moniteur*. He is a corker and above all he is a sport. Although dressed in his immaculate uniform: — red trousers, black coat and gold braid; hat with sides of robin's egg blue, then 3 gold stripes, and the top of brilliant red with gold braid adornment thereupon — in spite of this wonderful uniform he doesn't mind splashing around in the rain or mud, and is ready for whatever comes. Well, we arrived at the American Flying School, Monday P.M. Seven weeks ago it was a mere site. I could hardly believe my eyes at what has been accomplished. There are many finished barracks, storehouses, garages, Y. M. C. A. hospital, and rows of great *bessoneau* hangars; but in addition there is an enormous amount of construction

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work going on. When finished it will be the largest school of its kind. We are going to start flying Monday morning as we already have enough airplanes, gas, oil, supplies, and living accommodations to handle the available students. Each month we shall take an increasing number of students as our equipment expands. It is a wonderful sight to see the activity on all sides. Little railways and steam trains hauling supplies to the field; still smaller track and push cars to supplement these. Here and there great piles of lumber, terra cotta, gasoline barrels, bath tubs, and again an occasional large piece of machinery still uncrated. Everywhere motor trucks are bustling with loads of rock for the roads, or loads of supplies from X—. There are swarms of German prisoners at work all over the great field; there are jabbering little Frenchmen, and the regular enlisted Americans.

[Issoudun] Oct. 10, 1917

DEAR LU,

I am sitting in my room, or cubicle I should call it, at the American School of Aviation, somewhere in France! Douglas Campbell and I came down with our *moniteur* — a French captain

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and a real sport. By now both Doug and I are pretty fluent at the French, so we get on well with him. When we got here it was drizzling steadily as it has been for days and the slimy mud is something *fierce*. You never saw such a sight as is this place. For miles in any direction you care to look are barracks, storehouses, garages, mess shacks, great piles of lumber, barrels of gasoline, rows of hangars, young railways, trucks, tractors, steam rollers, motorcycles — well it's endless. Of course it isn't nearly finished yet, but we are starting the school at once on a provisional scale with a smaller number of students. When completed it will be the largest in the world. We live in long barracks that are partitioned off into cubicles for all the world like a Groton — or rather a Merryweather dormitory. Neither Doug nor I had brought cots, so we set to at 4 P.M. and built ourselves beds. We made the frames without trouble but the question was what to cover them with. There was no canvas so my covering was boards — on which I have slept two nights. Doug found a bed somewhere so he's fixed. Q. is getting me some heavy canvas in town today, likewise some denim or chintz or whatever the name of the stuff is — of which one makes cur-

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tains. I built a desk yesterday, my wash basin is being installed now, so by tonight I should be very well fixed. I look out on the sunny side, on a great endless plain, with a little wood off to the right. Then there is one of those typically French roads running across it, with rows of trees on each side; each tree being exactly the same size as its neighbor and all trees at exactly equal intervals. You never saw such plains. It's like looking out to sea on a calm day. Our brother officers seem like a nice lot, though there are very few I've ever known before. Q. Roosevelt has been here for weeks as Supply Officer and has done very good work. I've been walking miles trying to see a little of the place. The hangars themselves are nearly half a mile away. It certainly is wonderful what has been accomplished here in seven short weeks; there was nothing but a site here at that time. The weather I am extremely doubtful about. It has rained every day, or rather part of every day for a week, and when it rains the sliminess of the clay mud under foot is unequaled by any thing I ever saw before. The wind, too, blows hard at times, so I fear that during the winter we won't do too much flying, though we shall snatch every second of good

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weather. Our machines are all French ones ranging from the tubby two seaters to the tiny single seater *avion de chasse*. All students here will be men who have learned to fly in the States. We shall have, later on, separate classes for Chasse, Bombing, and Corps d'armée, a comprehensive term which includes artillery observation, infantry liaison and the like.

It is great getting into camp life again. In two short days I feel like a new man. Paris is a beautiful city and I love it, but me for a good rough life every time. Also we have American food here, and very good. I shall write soon again, dear Lu, and you know how good it is to get your letters.

Love,
HAM.

[Issoudun] France, Oct. 13th, 1917

DEAR DICKIE,

If there isn't much news to tell you, an overpowering feeling of gratitude provides an ample topic for this letter. The gratitude was evoked by a good letter from you and a box of superlative cigars which arrived the day after I got to camp, where such articles are unobtainable and provide

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many hours of comfortable satisfaction to the lucky possessor (and a very few to some of his *most* intimate friends!). Lu will have told you about our camp here and how perfectly great it is to get back to a good healthy outdoor life, with good food.

I haven't had a stroke of work to do this week, as I don't figure until flying starts day after tomorrow. It has rained every one of the five days I've been here and for three days preceding that, so when we walk we wade. Out from the barracks a little way it isn't half so bad, as there is fairly solid turf under foot. This afternoon I had an amusing walk out over the boundless, unfenced fields in the company of an aged rustic I picked up on his way home. We discussed the prevailing weather conditions and the objects of scenic interest we passed, including quantities of whopping big jack-rabbits. The little country towns such as the one I saw this P.M. are the most picturesque I have ever seen. All the farm buildings are made of stone, and the tiled roofs often overgrown with moss. They looked as if they had been there since the beginning of time.

All our buildings are electric lighted, but the steam heat was overlooked. No, they have wood

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stoves at the two ends and one in the middle.
My room doesn't happen to be near one.

Will write soon when things begin to happen.

Best love,

HAM.

[Issoudun] France

Sunday, Oct. 14, 1917

DEAR P. A.,

By way of news this Sunday I have little to tell, so I'm writing for the pleasure of it. Mother will have told you that I am down at the American Aviation School leading a very healthy, cheerful life, and waiting for tomorrow morning for flying to start. As I see it we start with a rather indefinite scheme of organization as it seems to me. I cannot see just how far they are going to carry the military. It is impossible to run the school, or any flying school on a strictly military basis with any degree of efficiency from an aeronautical point of view. For instance, it would be absurd to say that inspection will be held Saturday mornings at ten o'clock, because that might be the only good flying weather that day, yet it would be unmilitary not to do it that way, as I see it. Then I foresee inevitable difficulties between the

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military and flying administrations. Our commanding officer, though he has never had experience in this line, anticipates no difficulties, and I guess he expects things to work themselves out in practice. We start on a small scale, gradually enlarging as our equipment permits, and expect to be running full force in three months. Our machines are rebuilt French ones, but look quite fit.

Did I tell you how strongly I was impressed by American resourcefulness and ability when I arrived at the school—the first real chance of forming any opinion. The officers are almost all U. S. Reserve aviators, commissioned for flying rather than executive ability; nevertheless they have handled the construction work here with a rapidity and persistency characteristic of experienced men. The American soldiers are *remarkable*. In spite of almost endless thunder showers, consequent mud underfoot, and frequent lack of equipment, they work cheerfully and fast. I haven't heard a complaining word in the six days I've been here. They keep their trucks running under the meanest road conditions; they work hard on the construction work, and are back on the job the minute a shower lets up;

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they can't talk German, but never hesitate to take a gang of prisoners and put them on any job they see fit; they are resourceful. Given a small forge and a few tools, they will make almost anything they need. A Frenchman would, I feel, hold up his hands under similar circumstances. The French, of whom we have only a few here, are the most sincerely amiable people I've seen. There is something inexpressibly attractive in them all from country peasant to high military official. Yet they are easy going and slow workers. Our mechanics in the French motor factories were much impressed by the beautifully finished work they found, but were disgusted at the laziness and inefficiency. In one factory our mechanics got in wrong with all the workmen because they assembled a motor in *less than half* the time in which the French did it. Groups of our mechanics are working this way in all the big French plane and engine factories to learn all about the French product.

They say that the English are finding it difficult to combat the large three-man German air raider, due to the fact that it is so armed as to have no "blind angles," and its speed is almost as great as that of the tiny pursuit machines. At any

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rate, it will be very interesting to see what comes from the States. We hear great things about a new "Liberty Motor" just developed there.

With best love from your affectionate

H.

[Issoudun] France
Sunday, Oct. 21, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

I am a very busy man, so I shall try to write often, but must be more brief. The present situation is thusly: Fine weather, flying to our heart's content from 6 till 10 A.M. and 2.30 till 5 P.M. The rest of the time we do the many little jobs required to keep things going smoothly and prepare for the crowd we expect soon. I am chief of the "Penguins" (P. A. will interpret the term), but most of my clipped-wing birds have not yet arrived. I have passed successfully through three stages of flying and tomorrow, if all goes well, will try my luck on an "avion de chasse" such as Norman Prince and Victor Chapman used. As you progress through the six different stages the machines become smaller, more powerful, and faster. They didn't make me go on the penguins myself, so I've really passed in

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four of the stages. No smashes so far, but I have a habit of breaking those *darn* elastic shock absorbers; one went this afternoon just before I started off and it nearly made me veer into a hangar, but I just got her off the ground in time.

I shot my first partridge the other day, and presented it to our Major with compliments of "Beginner's Luck."

I have had no letters for about ten days, but they usually come in bunches so I hope for a lot soon.

Best love,
H.

France, Sunday, Oct. 28

DEAREST OF MOTHERS,

My news must be condensed this week, for I'm a busy man for once. To begin with I have had no mail for ages; but they say that all mail ships are being held up for repairs, so that is probably the reason, anyway I hope and pray that all goes well at home. As for me I never felt better and having a lot of work to do is a welcome change. To begin with I started my *rouleur* class with a new bunch of students and have been carrying on every minute of good weather. It is probably

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the most amusing job in the school. The *rouleurs* go a frightful speed, can't quite fly, and are very difficult for a beginner to control. Often a man starts out, swings right around, and comes roaring back at us with his machine completely out of control. He hits a bump, the propeller breaks with a crash and over he goes doing no little damage to the *rouleur*, but for some inexplicable reason he never gets hurt himself. It is expensive instruction for Uncle Sam, but once a pupil can guide a *rouleur* down the field and back in a straight line, he has mastered one of the most important parts of flying without ever leaving the ground.

Friday I went on a single seat scout machine or *avion de chasse*. I never in all my life experienced such sensations. The scout is entirely different from other planes, being very small, highly powered, fast, and painfully delicate on the controls. At first I found myself wallowing all over the lot because I was not used to being so gentle! Soon things improved; — just a little pressure with one foot or the other on the rudder-bar, a gentle touch to one side or the other with the *manche à balai*, a little more gas and less air or vice versa; and that does the trick. My

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landings were a little awkward at first and I bumped pretty hard. After I got the thing tamed a little I began to appreciate what a wonderful little craft it is. You have enormous reserve power, can climb almost straight up, and it answers the slightest touch on the controls, in fact it seems almost to respond to your will without any physical exertion on your part.

Saturday I was put in command of a squadron of over a hundred and fifty men, but the squadrons are shortly to be reorganized under a new administration, so the job is probably temporary. I never had such a job, as my squadron was completely demoralized and their quarters and mess shacks looked like pig pens. I was told to get them in hand and clean out the whole place. We have been working like dogs and the men have accomplished wonders in two short days. It breaks my heart to think that the squadron will be split up just as we are beginning to get some system and spirit — *mais c'est la guerre*. The C. O. of the whole camp, who gave me the job, is being relieved by another man, my boss at the last place, so I know not what to expect. The few days of it have been a great experience; and I hope more may follow along the same lines.

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I have to censor quantities of squadron mail now, so goodbye with best love to all.

Your

HAM.

[Issoudun] France, Oct. 29, 1917

DEAR LU,

I'm frightfully, almost painfully, busy just now trying to hold down two jobs in addition to flying. Consequently I've been forced to slow up on letters. One of my jobs is being *Moniteur des Rouleurs*, or grass cutting aeroplanes that don't quite fly; the other is being temporary C. O. of a squadron of over a hundred and fifty men until a certain reorganization goes into effect. This morning I was on the *rouleur* field from 6 till 11.30 — and all that sort of hard luck stuff, but in spite of it I feel like a king and am very happy to be at last practicing on a tiny speed scout. Haven't smashed yet myself for a wonder, but I wish you could attend my *rouleur* class some morning and see the little machines strewn around the field, some with broken wheels and tires, and others, having suffered a *capotage*, in this position — sticking up like church spires in a desert.

The Red Cross has opened an efficient lunch-counter in the Y. M. C. A., which adds materially

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to the luxury of life. I am very adept, however, on a little gasoline lamp-stove effect I have primarily for heating shaving water, but also for making cocoa, scrambling eggs, etc. Also you ought to see me bring down partridges with a second hand shotgun I bought — and as for eating same, well, I simply can't keep a straight face when it occurs to me in the middle of the process that I am a poor soldier-aviator undergoing the hardships of war; but the thought of getting up at 3.30 A.M. in the dampest, most penetrating cold I ever felt, to inspect the guard, somewhat offsets this luxury and eases my conscience.

Nearly every evening I have to censor a great stack of squadron mail; I feel like a bum reading other people's letters that way, but knowing it's a case of necessity I can easily enjoy some of the choice lines one finds. Nearly four out of every five begin: — My Dearest little Girl — and go on in that strain! I tell you I am learning lots in that line, and perhaps will be able to prove something one of these days — though the mails are very unsatisfactory! Speaking of mail, I haven't had a letter for over two weeks.

I haven't told you *anything* about the doings in these few pages, but it would take a book.

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You can see though how things are: Acres of ground just littered with great piles of lumber, and supplies of every description. Our own branch railway bringing in carloads of everything. Many buildings of all kinds already up and going; others in process of speedy construction. Half a mile away you see row after row of great canvas hangars. In the air above nearly all day long the buzzing of airplanes from the humming little scouts to the heavy roar of the biplane machines. Everywhere is hustle, activity, (and loads of mud!). Bunches of new students arrive every day and have to be arranged for. Men in any squadron caught loafing on guard:—court martial for them; why didn't Smith report to Jones at 3 P.M. etc., etc. You know the feeling when you come in ten minutes before mealtime and wonder how you can last out, and at night speculate whether you'll bother to brush your teeth; and the fact that your bunk is hard and your mattress is a layer of newspapers to keep out the cold, never so much as enters your head. Well, it's a great life and things happen so fast you can't keep track of them. I'll save the rest for another time and turn it off now with best love from

Your affectionate brother,

HAM.

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[Issoudun] Sunday, Nov. 4

DEAR LU,

I'm hopelessly busy these days. Am C. O. of a squadron here and you can imagine what a job it is. Censoring their mail alone takes over two hours every other day. Then I have to study Army Regulations all my spare time. This place has suddenly expanded to the most *overwhelming* proportions; it is becoming very *military*! Flying is temporarily suspended to get organization and construction in hand. We are on the go every minute and Sundays are exactly the same as every other day. When things get working smoothly the strain will be greatly relaxed, but just now it is fierce. I can't tell you a thing about it. Feeling *fine* and enjoying work. Flying the scout is *great* and it is the most interesting thing in the world to talk to these old pilots from the front — some from Lafayette Escadrille know P. C. and others. C. T. got a Boche the other day.

Will write a letter when I get time to catch my breath!

Love,
HAM.

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[*Issoudun*] Nov. 8, 1917

DEAREST OF MOTHERS,

I hope you haven't given me up for lost, because I am far from it. The great trouble is that for over a week I haven't had two minutes I could call my own, and unfortunately the provisions of censorship which officers are in honor bound to obey, forbid details of the whys and wherefores of this condition. Roughly however we have been undergoing a complete reorganization to adjust the place for the crowds of men who have been swarming in here. In my own case my demoralized company is rapidly shaping up. By a fearful fight I got new barracks for them, with real floors and good stoves — a brand new place they could respect and take pride in. Due to certain circumstances, however, this company requires practically my whole time, which is a little disconcerting. Yesterday Quentin Roosevelt was attached to my company and he being the Senior Lieutenant, becomes the C. O. (commanding officer) of the company. I am now his assistant — but it really is more than a one-man job. Also we always have gotten on well together, which helps.

You ought to see my latest investment. It's an officer's bedding roll consisting of an outside

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canvas cover and a blanket bag with two extra blankets within. The blankets are made of that wonderful Jaeger wool or camel's hair or whatever it is. When the roll is done up the following articles are inside: — a folding cot, a folding arm-chair, a folding bucket, a bath tub (rubber) and a flashlight with extra batteries. It is a great old piece of equipment and just the thing for the front.

In the present state of affairs it is impossible to tell what will become of an individual. Personally if certain things occur as they very likely will, I have a possibility, I think, of getting to the front this winter. On the other hand if I get tied up in the administration, goodness knows when I shall get there.

This place seems swamped but gradually things are bound to get straightened out. Oh, I forgot to tell you about the last day of flying. I left my *Rouleur* class about four and arrived at the *cbasse* field just before an inspecting committee of distinguished Frenchmen. I nearly had a fit as I climbed in because my *rouleurs* had kept me so busy I hadn't been able to practice for several days. All the others had stopped flying. Once off the ground I sat back and laughed, but then came the exhibition landings in a circle. I

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dove the machine at a frightful pace and levelled off just right and made a star landing! The next one wasn't quite so good, and the third was after returning to the hangars. The castor oil was so thick on windshield and goggles that I could hardly see and I never came so near crashing before. Thank heaven the old French commission didn't see that one.

The Red Cross ladies are running a fine little lunch room here, where you can get hot toast, coffee, jam, fresh butter and such delicacies at any hour — a blessing to mankind. I can't talk about the things that are on my mind; they deal mostly with things that may delay my flying or hamper it, and are nothing to worry about. As for health I seldom have time to even think about it, but it occasionally does occur to me that I never felt better in my life. . . . Must go to lunch now dear Mummy and close with bestest love,

H.

DEAR LU, [Issoudun], France, Nov. 9

*The rain it raineth every day,
The mud is two feet deep,
We plough through it at work or play,
And see it in our sleep.*

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*Whoever called this "sunny France,"
(If I could have my way)
On red-hot coals would have to dance,
After his earthly stay.*

*The morn is always chill and drear,
And noon-day much the same,
But now of course we're really here,
And mighty glad we came!*

— Written for the occasion by H. C. (unassisted!). It takes a good deal to stir your brother's soul to poetic expression, but in this case the inspiration is ample. Honestly, I wish you could see it! and the mud is so slippery that you lose a few feet for every one you gain. It used to be a full morning's exercise making your way over to the mess shack for breakfast. It really is wonderful how cheerful everybody keeps, and how hard the men work. Perhaps I told you that Q. and I had a company together. Well, you ought to see them. They move into new barracks without any bunks; after lunch they go to it and by supper-time the bunks are finished, neatly lined against the wall, and the place is all swept out. No place to cook or eat? — it doesn't phase them. One of them locates some lumber and tools and

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in half a day a new mess hall appears. You give a mere suggestion and when you come back later you find them tinkering away. They have two large barrels on a platform outside for a water tank, they wink as they show you a perfectly good kitchen hot water tank they "found somewhere"; you ask no questions! They repair a broken stove from the junk-pile, put a coil of pipe in it, connect it up to the tank and home-made shower, and the job is done. It really is wonderful how resourceful the Americans are. The French can't understand it at all, but nevertheless they get on wonderfully together.

Flying seems to be a thing of the past. Due to the weather and certain other conditions (sh!) we haven't flown for over a week, and goodness knows how we shall have time to anyway, judging by our present duties. My particular company requires my whole time, because, due to a most unfortunate circumstance, they can do none of the work around camp, and have to be kept busy all day. Q. has just been ordered to —, so the command falls to me again, worse luck.

In flying time I drive a little Nieuport. Compared to the planes I was used to in America it goes like a bullet, but it is out of date as a fighting

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plane. Fortunately it is no harder to drive a Spad; at least they say so. The accounts of the "acrobacy" we have to learn send the shivers down my spine; everything goes well if you act exactly according to instructions, but a false move in some cases would "cause you to lose a wing" because the speed is so great. It would be disconcerting to lose a wing. I have a sneaking suspicion I can get away with it though, because I have always felt at home in a machine.

Tomorrow I understand we are not going to work. It will be the first Sunday here that we haven't worked, but I must admit it hasn't done me any harm. Lu, do keep those swell letters of yours coming. You surely do write the best letters that ever were.

Blessings to you, Dickie, and the kiddies,
H.

[Issoudun] France
Nov. 16, 1917

DEAREST P. A.,

The last batch of mail was a rich one indeed for me. A large box containing some fine cigars, candies, crackers, socks and a can of beans, arrived too. Someone with a kind heart and a

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sense of humor sent that; are you guilty? I am awfully pleased because it's a fact that you cannot get such things here and they are just the kind of thing I most appreciate. Whoever made those socks did an excellent job, and socks such as those I can use all the time in the mud and wet.

You spoke of my not coming in the door after G. had arrived. Well, I often do, only no one sees me! I can picture every detail of the little house and the big family, and it often seems hard to realize that a great ocean divides us. Anyway, there is a lot of comfort in being close in spirit, at least.

You gave me some hints about what kind of things to put in my letters. Thanks a lot; it's often very difficult to pick out the details that are of most interest to others. Bessonaux hangars are merely portable French canvas hangars with wooden framework. As for my companions:— Did you meet D. C. at Tech? He is one of my best friends, and of course Q. R. whom I have already mentioned. Lt. Q. R., H. C. and two other Lts. (names withheld) run a school company under somewhat peculiar circumstances. The experience is, no doubt, valuable, but there are many experts who will tell you that a flyer

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should have to fly and do nothing else. As it is flying is incidental. In fact — no, better not. The actual flying is as interesting as it can possibly be. As you know, I am in a class on the *avions de chasse* — the smallest and fastest type, which is quite satisfactory to your H., only he hopes soon to go where he can fly on a more modern version of the same thing and go much faster! Yesterday we tried some *vol de groupe* work which is difficult at first but very amusing. Two of us followed a leader so close we could see his every gesture when he signalled back. We practise in different ways all the time. For instance, as we walk up to a machine on the ground we say to ourselves — “eighty-five yards” — then pace it off to see how close we guessed. It is essential to be able to judge your opponent’s distance in combat. Then, every time we glide down from any considerable height we pick out some farmhouse or other distant object and sight on it as if we were shooting at it. The aiming is done by turning the whole machine as is the case in real fighting with monoplace planes. It is very difficult to keep your sight steadily on the objective; it means moving the hand a little on the stick, a slight pressure on one toe, then the

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other perhaps, and so on. But then you can notice the improvement before long. A man must be a good shot even above being a clever pilot.

As usual I am in the best of health and cheerful as regards myself. There is something, however, that troubles me a good deal at times and of which I dare not speak. I quote a sign that you see in all the Paris subway stations in the hopes that it will give you an indication of what I mean.

TAISEZ-VOUS

MÉFIEZ-VOUS

LES OREILLES ENNEMIES VOUS ÉCOUTENT!

It's possible that I suffer from hallucinations, but I don't think so.

With love to you and all,

Your affectionate

P. S.

H.

I should very much like the "Pageant of English Poetry," which seems to me an unusually good collection of verse.

[Issoudun] November 24, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

This letter ought to reach you about Christmas time so here are my wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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Mummy, it's hard not being at home at this time of year, because Christmas has always been the biggest family occasion. It was the one time of year when we were all together and we saw more of Grandma and Grandpa, M——, when she was alive (and what a wonderful Christmas spirit she inspired in us all!), the Uncles, Aunts, and Cousins, — than in all the rest of the year. So anyway just think of me as doing everything with you — buying presents and making E—— do them up for me, the *Crèche* on Christmas Eve, and then the happy family party on Christmas Day, and attending King's Chapel *en masse* to feel ourselves even more closely together and realize perhaps a little better the meaning of Christmas. It's just the perversity of fate that we are not all together this year, but the spirit of Christmas will be as strong as ever and have a more important influence than ever before — that of giving us strength for our new and unaccustomed tasks which the war has laid on our shoulders. This Christmas will be a happy one for us all, because we are able to do our bit in the great struggle, and for you, dear mother, is the satisfaction of contributing to the cause far more than "just your share," not in gold it's true

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but in human beings, ten of them — strong and healthy, with hearts set upon doing their best in the way in which he or she is best fitted, and all working together in a spirit of unity and family loyalty which nothing can destroy or lessen.

Here's a big toast to you and all, probably in bad French wine, but hearty none the less.

Your loving son,

H.

[*Issoudun*] November 23, 1917

DEAREST P. A.,

The purpose of this letter is primarily to wish you a Merry Christmas, and tell you how I wish I could be with all the family as usual. It can't be done so I shall make the best of things as they come. What I should like to do on Christmas would be to climb about fifteen thousand feet and just imagine I am at home. At that height it's so lonely you can imagine yourself anywhere without any distractions to destroy the illusion. I've only been up 13,000 ft. so far.

More and more men keep pouring in and one is constantly meeting old friends. Most of mine are men from the first, second, and third ground school classes at Tech. Leighton Brewer, who

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was in my class at Groton and then went to Yale, is here as a cadet, and Robert Stiles of Fitchburg, a friend at Buffalo in the summer of 1916, appeared yesterday. Our plans are undefined, but we (meaning the first scout class) shall probably graduate in the course of two months or so, and then —?

Your loving
HAM.

American School of Aviation Headquarters
December 1, 1917

DEAR LU,

I have just been away for a week on one of the most amusing trips I ever made. Six of us were supposed to start out together, fly 'cross country to T——,* and return the same afternoon if the weather was good. Owing to little delays, however, none of us did start together, so it was a case of each man for himself. T—— is about a hundred miles away, so there were all sorts of possibilities connected with the trip. Needless to say, I got totally lost ten minutes after the start; none of the features on the ground corresponded to anything my little map showed. That did not

*[Tours]

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worry me much because I knew the direction of T——, and I had the setting sun as a guide. Well, I wandered for nearly two hours that way without seeing any signs of the place, and my gas was almost gone when I finally did see a good-sized city ahead. As I drew near it became obvious that it was not T——. In fact, there was a building on the outskirts of the city, with the name A——* in huge letters on the roof. I landed in a large field beside the building which turned out to be a former airplane hangar. A great crowd assembled in about a minute, and with the help of my excellent French! I got them to push the machine into the hangar. I then gorgeously paid my respects to the colonel in command of the French post in whose grounds I had landed. He sent two sentinels to guard the machine, and told me that there was an American Base Hospital in the city. There I was well treated by the officers all of whom came from the University of Pittsburg, and were nice men.

During the next two days the weather was so bad that it was impossible to fly, so I went all over the town with a navy lieut. We saw the wonderful mediæval castle, built by the duke of

*[Angers]

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Anjou in the 13th century. There were two beautiful cathedrals, too, and a subterranean passage connected one of them with the castle. Another less agreeable occupation was trying to buy enough castor oil at chemist shops to fill up the tank of my machine. The druggists thought I surely must be a little off in the upper story, and I had the weirdest collection of medicine bottles of all shapes and sizes. They didn't half fill my tank, either, and thereby hangs quite a sad tale!

The next day, Thanksgiving, was cloudy, but a telephone message from the flying school at T—— informed me that it was possible to fly. I was tired waiting for good weather, so I decided to make a try for T——. The colonel and other dignitaries came out to see me off, not to mention a crowd of soldiers, women, children, and the inevitable dogs. Five minutes after the start my motor began to cough alarmingly, but I was able to turn back and make the field all right before the old thing died. The trouble, broken spark plug wire, was easy to fix, and I would have thought nothing more of the incident as I gaily started out again, had it not been for the realization that I had used up ten minutes' worth of precious castor oil which had not advanced me a

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foot nearer T——. That was soon forgotten in the effort to dodge the troublesome clouds which hung low over the river. Forty, forty-five, fifty minutes passed, and still no signs of T——. Then I suddenly recognized something that convinced me that I was at last just outside of my destination. But here the perversity of Fate got the better of the situation. A solid wall of fog lay ahead, making a plunge into the unknown beyond a risky matter at best. At just that moment I happened to glance at my oil gauge, and it was empty! To leave the motor running would ruin it under those circumstances; there was nothing to do but come down. I desperately looked for an open field, chose the only one that didn't seem to be surrounded with hedges, and came sailing down in a way that the little Nieuport has of coming down, — pretty average fast. The field was small, but I had apparently judged my glide well, and would come to rest before hitting the vineyard at the other end. I cut my switch and was all set to settle neatly on the ground, when bing! the tip of my right wing hit a tiny sapling I hadn't noticed, and I made three whirlwind gyrations amid a sickening crackle of framework. When I came to rest, the remains of

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my poor machine were in a perpendicular position, with your young brother, unscathed, still strapped to the seat. I never even had time to get scared till after it was all over, and then there wasn't any point. In spite of the painful thought of completely demolishing my faithful little plane, I couldn't help smiling at the ridiculous sight I presented sitting in the midst of the wreckage as people came flying from every direction, expecting, as I gathered from their conversation, to shovel my remains into a dump-cart. I see now the mistake I made in not falling on the ground, and at least putting up a bluff of being hurt, because they thought they had seen a real accident, and seemed a little disappointed at not being able to run for doctors and an ambulance.

While I was changing my sheep-lined shoes for walking shoes a boy came up, and asked me in broken English if I wouldn't come to his "castle" for lunch. He was followed a moment later by his father, the Comte de Beaumont(!), as he introduced himself. It was in his back yard that I had crashed, and one of his most promising young cherry trees that I had ruined, but he assured me that it mattered not at all, and that if it did live it would be an historic tree. I took

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one good look at it as we passed, and decided that whereas some of the ground around it might be pretty well hallowed, that tree was not destined to be historic. We dined sumptuously in the chateau, but I couldn't help thinking a little ruefully of the Thanksgiving dinner I might have had at the flying field four miles away if it had not been for such poor luck.

After lunch, while waiting for the wrecking crew, we wandered back to the machine, which we found surrounded by a crowd of children who were highly amused at the whole thing, and yelled with delight when I picked up one small boy in wooden shoes, and put him in the seat to work the controls. After that nothing would do but let each boy in the whole crowd get in, one after another. They really seemed quite excited about it, the cunning kids. The wreckers finally arrived, decided that it was too late to do anything that day (it was four o'clock), and took me back to T—— after I had parted with the count and young Jean with most affectionate farewells. At the school I found several old friends, among them Seth Low, whom I knew at school. I promptly suggested that I thought it would be a *swell* idea if he took me back to I—— the next

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morning in his bi-motor Caudron. He said he would, weather permitting! You see he knows many of the officers here, and rather welcomed the excuse, such as it was, to get away from T—— and see his friends here. In the morning the weather didn't permit, so I had a chance to look over the whole school, and see some different machines from those we have here. The remains of my machine came in just before lunch, so I went to shed a last tear upon them, and cut out the red, white, and blue target as an everlasting memorial of my first crash. Arrangements were made to send it back by rail.

After lunch S. decided to start, although the clouds still hung low in a solid ceiling. The mechanics brought out the big Caudron, and tested the motors while we got in, Seth in the pilot's seat behind, and I in the observer's cockpit in front of him between the two motors. It wasn't a minute after taking off before we were completely surrounded by clouds, but Seth just pointed the nose up, and opened the motors wide. Suddenly we came out into another world, with an endless expanse of fluffy white carpet just below us, and a clear blue sky with a bright sun above. We flew on with our wheels almost

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touching the solid white cloud-bank. It gave one the queerest mixture of sensations, because we were forging steadily ahead like a fast steamer, yet at the same time we appeared to be on a vast snow field. We flew on by compass for nearly an hour, guided by occasional glimpses of the earth through rifts in the cloud bank. When we judged that we must be near the camp, we dropped blindly through the clouds for a minute, and came out of them right over the field, on which we landed as lightly as a feather. My first voyage was at an end!

Lu, I must confess that two days have elapsed since the foregoing part of this atrociously written letter; but one is mighty busy here in the daytime, and last evening we had a very impromptu concert, during which a section of the stove-pipe in the officer's sitting-room fell down, and absolutely ruined one of the newly arrived lieutenants. He was covered with about two inches of soot, and I am still weak from laughing. Life grows more interesting every day, as we learn more of the wild things you can do with an airplane. Acrobacy used to be considered an occupation for fools and suicides, now it is an essential part of the training of a war pilot, and naturally

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it is satisfying to have a justification for doing stunts. Some day I shall describe some of the stunts to you, but will spare you this time. One thing I cannot realize is that by the time you get this letter Christmas will have passed. We even lose track of the days of the week here, because Sundays and weekdays are just alike. We fly whenever the weather is good no matter what day of the week it is. We hear the rumor that innumerable sacks of mail have arrived in P——. That certainly is great news, for none of us have received any November mail yet, and if I don't get one of those good fat letters from you or D., I shall feel pretty low.

Good-night, L., it's supper time. Give my best to Dickie and the kids.

Your affectionate brother, HAM.

[*Issoudun*] Dec. 10, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

The last haul was a big one — some twelve letters in all. Douglas Campbell brought them over while we were patiently waiting at the acrobatic field for an airplane that never appeared, so I had a pretty satisfactory occupation during the wait.

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I'm safely through my acrobatics and quite cheerful on that account, because I must confess that I had moments of doubt beforehand whether my mind would continue to function normally when I was upside down in mid-air and dropping like a stone. For some strange reason it did work all right, in fact it really came almost as a matter of course to do stunts because I have always loved flying and anything connected with it. It really lends considerable excitement to your first acrobatic attempts to be told beforehand that if you forgot and did the wrong thing at the wrong time the strain would probably be too great for the wings, which would promptly collapse. Anyway it made one quite careful to rehearse the motions before going up for the stunt. The acrobatics are all tactics used in battle; and things for mere show, such as the loop, are left out.

The real blow is that they *want* men for the front, and as I was the second man to graduate it would be logical for me to go, *but* they think I am needed here to be in charge of one of the departments, so here I stay for a while at least. There are five other officers in the same predicament, and we rave about it every time we meet, but it does no good. Administration jobs are

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all right, but when they keep you in a swivel chair away from the action they are *rotten*. D. C. puts it aptly when he says, "I would rather be a private flying at the front, than a Major in an office chair in Paris," and I must admit I agree with him, though one must realize that this is a war where one's personal preferences should be laid aside at the start.

.
It just occurs to me, Mammy, that I last wrote you from the American Hospital at —, where I waited patiently for good weather on my 'cross-country trip, after having lost myself in the early stages of the flight. I wrote L. a detailed account of the sad return trip, but the only vitally important fact is that my motor went *en panne* just outside the city, where landing places were all bad, and in the process of trying to slip into a very small field at high speed my wing tip caught on a tiny tree which sent me end over end! The poor plane suffered almost total destruction, losing all four wings in the *mêlée*, but your son was not so much as *scratched*. They say in France that God protects fools, drunkards, and Americans. It must surely be true! Flying seems to become more and more easy, natural, and delightful as

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one gains in experience (even of the kind just mentioned).

It seems next to impossible to finish a letter at one sitting now, because we have been enjoying the unprecedented phenomenon of an unbroken stretch of *perfect* weather, in this usually rainy time of year. The ground is always frozen in the mornings, but thaws out about noon, bringing on the inevitable mud which breaks the propellers of the airplanes (it flies off the wheels as the machines start along the ground) and gives you permanent wet feet, cold, bronchitis, pneumonia, etc. What a life!

Good night dear Mammy,

Your loving H.

France, Dec. 26, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER,

All I could do yesterday was to dope out the time when each happening was going on at home, and it gave me great thrills to figure out that "now the family must be just finishing breakfast, and starting in to open presents." I had a great Christmas here, but in spirit I spent the entire day at #10 W. H. P., Boston, Mass., U.S.A.!

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I've just moved in to a new room that has a tiny stove therein. Well, at 6 o'clock I got up and worked until the stove fairly glowed red all over. Then the room got nice and warm about eight. D. C. had put all our presents out on a table, so we had a glorious time sitting there in our pajamas opening them. We spent the day resting up and fixing up our room. One package arrived today, but aside from that the others arrived before Christmas. I am very grateful for all these things, and hope soon to be able to write letters to each giver. It was such fun having real Christmas packages to open, done up in white paper and red ribbon!

As for life in general, Mammy, it goes along quite well, everything considered. Of course the eternal question is "when will they send us to the front?" There seems to be nothing to do but forget it, because if one listened to all the rumors around here it would seriously incapacitate one's brain. I was given a job as officer of a certain new field when that field would be in operation but today some of the men higher up went over and took a good look at it and promptly decided "nothing doing"; it was altogether too rough. So now I officially go on the testing work (I've been

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doing it unofficially for some time). It is quite exciting because you never know what a brand new plane will do, or an old one just from the repair shop.

Q. is now away in a part of the country where the weather is very warm and pleasant. He got a slight touch of pneumonia when I got my gripe. Of my other companions I don't say much; it isn't quite according to form, and you know very few of them indeed. A few friends from Miami and Tech and one other Grottie, S. L., are all I knew before. It's amusing to realize that you know where I am by the postmark! Only *don't* address letters here!

Best love,
H.

France, December 27

DEAR ROGER,

Your dandy little flashlight came safely and I am *very* grateful for it. My room is about five minutes' walk away from where we eat, and you nearly break your neck tumbling over things on your way up each night, so your flashlight with *extra battery* solves the problem perfectly.

I am one of the testers now and it is a great

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job. We have to try out and adjust all the new planes after they have been put together, and all the old smashed ones that have been fixed. I often give the mechanics a ride when testing a two-seater; they seem to enjoy it a lot. Many of our machines are single seaters and very fast. They are the most fun, but of course one has to be more careful with them. Doing acrobatics is *swell* fun, but there is one thing that is even more fun. That is to get in a good reliable plane and fly all over the country just five or ten feet above the ground. You chase autos, and farmers are scared stiff sometimes, but you always go up just before you get to them. Then there are enormous flocks of crows and other peeps, and it is more fun to fly right through these flocks, scaring the birds and sometimes hitting them with your wires or wings. Sometimes, too, your motor breaks down and then it is not so much fun. One night I had to leave my machine way out in a field and walk home in the dark. That was punk.

Your letters have been coming in regularly of late, and you are a good kid brother! Do keep on writing, because every word you say reminds me of the dear old school and cheers me up

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(even to hear of your troubles!), because some day you will look back at them and laugh over them.

Your affectionate brother,

HAM.

Jan. 6, 1918

MOTHER DEAR,

For nearly three weeks I've been right up against it in the testing department and have not even been able to finish all my thank notes. It really has been a pretty hard pull because we had an uninterrupted spell of perfect weather and my department had to turn out machines as fast as it could to satisfy the clamors of the multitudes. Added to those troubles it soon developed that I was responsible not only for testing the machines, but for the organization and administration of the department. Well I've been doing it, but the strain has become too great and my flying has fallen off badly. I could not get five minutes off, and on Sundays had to referee football games if the weather was too bad to fly! So you see your poor son is a tired man, though not discouraged. One disappointment was hard to bear. Several of my friends were able to go with a squadron des-

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tined very shortly for the front, but though I raised a kick to go, they said that they would have to keep me here to test, as no one else had had any experience in that line!

Things are beginning to cheer up though. To-day is the first rainy day in a *month*, so it gives us a chance to get our breath a little, also they have at last given me a cadet to take charge of all the administration of the department so that all I will have to do is to test the machines as fast as they can be brought out. The other tester is a temperamental Frenchman, but a little dear. I have to spend much time as a diplomat between the French mechanics and the Americans. They don't get on at all! The French are very jealous of their work and are only getting *one twentieth* the pay that the U. S. gives their mechanics, so that is one cause of feeling. Our government makes no provision for paying or clothing the former, poor men, so I occasionally give them socks, shoes and cigarettes to keep them happy.

Douglas Campbell, my roommate and friend, has just gone to the squadron I spoke of before in this letter. Seth Low has done the same, so I feel lonely. Darn it, I only took up testing as

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an interesting experience while I was waiting for another job which never materialized. You understand my work is fascinating, but it is keeping me from the front. On the next good day there will be ten or twelve fast little planes to test out. I look forward to a lot of fun. We take a plane up to try it every way, see if it balances right, see if we can let go of the controls, and do acrobatics with certain types. On coming down you tell the mechanics just how it acts and what changes in adjustment to make; then try again. Sometimes as many as six or eight test flights are necessary before the plane is fit to turn out. Often motors go bad or the machine is balky, that is why you should have plenty of sleep and not have other things on your mind; also some of them go a hundred and twenty miles an hour and are delightfully sensitive, but you simply must have a clear head to handle them properly.

[*Issoudun*] January 7, 1918

LU, YOU ANGEL,

I haven't even uttered a murmur in your direction for weeks, but it isn't because I haven't wanted to, you can rest assured of that.

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Ever since Christmas and even before, I've been on the go every minute, because until today we have had an uninterrupted spell of clear, cold weather with 3 in. of snow on the ground. I walked into this testing job without ever dreaming that the chief tester would leave soon after and fall sick in Paris, leaving one Frenchman and myself to test all the machines that were assembled or repaired. It has been fun at times, but the worries of trying to keep the machines coming through, of bossing stupid mechanics, and of stopping scraps between the French and American mechanics, took all the joy out of life. Also you couldn't tell when they might send you up in a plane with a bolt missing, etc. Now it is raining like mad — no flying, and a chance to rest up, write a few of the innumerable letters I owe, and at last get a man to take care of the organization and routine work, leaving us free to test and not have to worry about a hundred other little details of the work.

But Lu, I never realized how I was getting involved when I walked into this job. Several of my best friends have gone — you know where — and I have had to stay because there "was no one else who had had any experience testing."

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Golly it makes me wild, but I think soon I shall be able to get away and if not actually join my friends, get in a close second.

Your aff. brother, HAM.

France, Sunday, Jan. 13, 1918

DEAR P. A.,

I have just received three more S. S. P. packages which I attribute to my family, as they are unmarked and contain articles which are typical of your good judgment and affection!

This morning I and my roommate, T. E. P. Rice got up at nine o'clock and cooked breakfast over our little coal stove. We had coffee, fish-balls, scrambled eggs, toast, deviled chicken, dates and butter — (much of which came from the boxes) and yet we are at war! The weekdays are a different story as indeed are many of the Sundays. For well over a month the snow has remained and the weather has been clear and cold. I average about fifteen to twenty test flights on every good day and each machine requires 3 to 8 tests with adjustments between each before we O. K. it for the "field." I love my work more than anything I ever did before, but it leaves me no time off and I am very tired at

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night. The experience of flying so much and so often on different types of planes will surely stand me in good stead some day, and what a keen eye I have developed for defects! I trust no man, but inspect every machine myself, and some of the things I've found made my hair stand on end. It won't be long now before I go to the front, I think; here's hoping it comes soon.

You ask what I do in spells of bad weather — there don't seem to be any. I can't say much about the *kind* of men here. The men in my particular dept. are a French tester of two years' experience at the front, and a perfect corker; several expert French mechanics, and many Americans, keen, quick to learn, but of little experience, and sometimes *careless*. I hop on them hard for that; it does not go in aviation. The aspects of the town which postmarks my letters are typical of old French towns. It is interesting historically and the houses are of an architectural school which no one will ever discover. Picturesqueness rather than symmetry or comfort is the keynote. I have been there possibly four times since I've been here, to take in my laundry.

The reading I do is insignificant. I read with great pleasure Dostoyevski's "Poor People" when

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I was sick; but have had no time to read anything but poetry (Shakespeare) and occasionally the Bible since then. There are no prospects of study and the prospects of *leave* do not exist. In ten months of army life I have never had a day's leave of absence and certain reasons make it impossible to expect any for a long time to come. Even if these reasons were removed I could not leave my job. I am very short on uniforms but rumor has it that the Aviation uniform will shortly change.

Once more I revert to the boxes which have brought me so much pleasure and satisfaction, and *all* of which to the best of my knowledge and belief have arrived. The family letters are like bubbling springs to the weary traveller; they really are my best recreation. Thank goodness, the work is the thing I love most; otherwise the continued persistent effort of trying to turn out machines which are safe, sound and true — as fast as possible — without leave and with very few days off, — would be too much after a while. I suppose the same thing applies at home where you are all slaving under pressure that would be hard indeed to endure were it not for persistence and the inspiration of the cause.

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They apparently need me here, but I hope to have my position filled before long by some of those who would be willing enough to take it for a while, as I feel that I have served my turn at this school and should be allowed to go where some of my best friends now are taking the long chance in the service of the country.

With love,
H.

Sunday, January 20

DEAREST MOTHER,

Another good week has passed without incident of particular note, though a few years back any day of my present career would have seemed monumental. As a matter of fact it often seems like a dream; one feels very tired at night and sees accidents that put a more human aspect on it all, but the actual flying seems hardly possible.

This morning I woke up and was just turning over to go to sleep again when the roar of motors at my hangars made me wonder whether it could be Sunday. But there they were, the machines all out on the line ready to fly, so I hustled on up and got to work. I never have seen such rough weather, several times the belt was all that

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kept me from being pitched out. We stuck to it all morning, but found out later that someone had made a mistake and we were not supposed to work! So now I am very tired from flying in such bumpy air and the mechanics are skunked out of half a day's rest. It is a great experience, testing, and my partner, a dear little Frenchman of two years' experience at the front, has taught me many things about flying. We have sort of a rivalry, naturally, over the work, and each day I compare our results on the side. I generally make more flights, spend more time in the air, and work longer hours, but he invariably O. K.s the largest number of planes each day. He can feel all the defects of a machine in a five minute flight, where it usually takes me ten.

One of my friends from school in Quent's and my class arrived here a few days ago from the front where he has been serving with the French army for five and a half months in Guynemer's famous squadron! Well you can just bet that I opened my ears when he told us in the most casual and unconceited way of his experiences over the lines in his Spad. He has two Boches to his credit already. Guynemer, he says, was a thin little Frenchman, almost effeminate in his ways,

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and totally unimpressive until he got into his aeroplane. "His whole expression changed, and he seemed like an entirely different man," he told us. Guynemer was not a very spectacular pilot, but had a keen scent for the Boches. He could spot them further away than anyone else, consequently he usually caught them by surprise, and he was a sure shot. Well it all thrills me and gives me an idea of the excitement of air fighting. Also my friend "Chink," as he was called at school, tipped me off on a few manœuvres to practice while testing; it's very convenient to kill two birds with one stone.

Your loving
HAM.

Sunday, January 26

DEAREST MOTHER,

Another beautiful Sunday morning, and the good part about it this time is that it was so foggy all yesterday that no one could fly. Two good days' rest will fix me up perfectly. Today Tat Rice and I are going to walk to a little town about four or five miles away to have lunch in a most attractive country inn there. Except for these little parties I haven't been out of this

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camp since October 8. My leave of absence comes due on or about the 15th of February, and I think I shall take it unless they cannot get on without me, because a change would really be pleasant and I would come back all set for any amount of work.

We have just been having a visit from a magazine writer who is going the rounds of our flying camp. When he arrived at our testing dept. my companion M. D—— was just coming to land and zig-zagging from right to left to land as slowly as possible. It takes the utmost skill to do that properly, and only years of flying make it possible; any aviation expert would have opened his eyes in surprise, but our magazine writing friend merely exclaimed, "Look at that Frenchman; he can't decide which way to turn! Are *all* the French pilots like that?" Well, in a few weeks we shall probably see articles in our magazines saying how much better the American pilots are than the French, etc. They oughtn't to let boneheads like that write articles by which Americans at home will get such false impressions. And yet if he dwells on the remarkable development of the camp he would do well. I can hardly realize it, having been here all along, yet it is a

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fact that in a few months this school has grown from nothing to one of the very largest in the world!

About the letter I wrote quite a while ago on "worry," let me say that the cause of my worry will never again worry me and that two of his co-workers will not cause much more worry either. There was something *unmistakable* about it all. Nothing that you could lay your hand on, but one's intuition fairly screamed out the truth within one.

Again I have had the annoying experience of breaking down away from camp. This time my gas tank went dry, but luckily over good country where I made a safe landing; but I had to walk home two miles in flying clo. The mechanic dug ditches all yesterday as a punishment for his carelessness. In the air one constantly must be on the watch for other planes buzzing endlessly round and round their respective fields. Well twice in the past week I have been caught napping by pilot friends of fighting experience who attacked me from above as in actual battle. We had five or ten minutes of the most exciting mimic combat I ever knew, each of us performing every known evolution in an endeavor to get "on the

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other man's tail" where a few shots from a *mitrailleuse* would do the trick in real life. Needless to say I was shot many times over!

Best love,
HAM.

[Issoudun] France
Feb. 4, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

I have no time, no place to write, but loads to say. The main news of myself is that they decided I had learned enough of testing to do it independently; so they sent me over to one of our outlying fields to take charge of all planes and mechanics. The machines are in *awful* condition, the mechanics all green as grass, but willing enough. I should be discouraged about the change were it not for the fact that I know there is a very real need here which can be filled only by some one with experience in testing, and it should be some one with much more than I have, but such is lacking at present. Q. is here, as are Cord Meyer and George Turnure — old friends.

I must stop for now but will come again very soon.

Love,

H.

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[*Paris*] *France, Feb. 8, 1918*

DEAREST MOTHER,

I am once more writing from my original station where not so long ago my Aunt Helen and Uncle John lived. Up here to get new aeroplanes and fly back in them, but the weather has kindly been very bad for two days, so here I stay living in luxury at the Hotel Crillon with a comfortable bed and real hot bath. I'm living just as comfortably these few days as I know how, because I needed it — just beginning to feel a touch of nerves at the school — this will fix me up I'm sure.

Well, Mummy, I got on the train for here with a big handful of unopened letters from my family. It was a great treat and I continually have qualms at not writing more often, but I feel almost shaky in the evenings quite often and very tired always. Sundays I try to devote largely to family and generally succeed.

Here I've been rushing around doing a thousand errands for self and others, spending untold moneys on clothes (chiefly) which I've needed for months, and generally enjoying life. Cousin Arthur Hill I saw at Prunier's for just two minutes the other evening, but I shall try to get hold of

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him this evening for dinner. I have been dining with friends, some leaving for the Front at once, others of more recent acquaintance. One, a Capt. Bowle Evans of the English Rifle Brigade, I met only the other day. We had dinner together last night and my opinion of the typical English officer has changed 100 % for the better. I couldn't understand them because I hadn't known them, but this man gave me some very different ideas. He has been fighting in the trenches for over two years and is very tired, but wonderfully persistent and brave about it all.

This afternoon I shall call on Miss Grace Harper, if the weather does not clear up in time to fly home today. Great news about Joe and I hope to goodness they send him near my station, so we might get together. I'd give just about \$1000 in cold cash to see a father or mother or brother or sister now!

Lovingly ever,
YOUR HAM.

[Issoudun] Sunday, Feb. 10th

DEAR LU,

I've just spent four glorious days at my "former station." Sent up there to get new machines and

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fly back, but the weather was bad so we *bad* to stay! It was just long enough to have a glorious time without getting tired of it. Then Saturday was a fine day and our flight down here was most satisfactory (except that I took the cushion out of my seat before starting in order to keep down out of the wind, and it got *very* hard after two and a half hours' ride!). I knew the way like a book this time, (the result of careful study), but also had a good map for occasional reference.

Here I am back and at this outlying field where Quent is practically my only old friend, and where the planes are perfect *wrecks*, having had no one to oversee their care. My job is consulting surgeon, so to speak, and I test all the cases that are bad and need to be changed.

The only thing that really upsets me is that I have it on good authority that they intend to keep me on this kind of work for several months to come — as if anyone else couldn't do it after a little instruction from that French tester. It's not so much fun flying these junks as it was the new ones at my last job, but it is much needed, so here goes. Good night, you old dear.

Best love,
HAM.

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Sunday, Feb. 10

DEAREST P. A.,

Quentin R. has just given me the "Pageant of English Poetry," which delights my heart. I read Dostoiewski, when convalescing, with good interest, but have not had time for the others which are at present being enjoyed by a Red X lady to whom I lent them not long ago. The family letters are about the best reading matter I could possibly want and I do hope that you will all be able to keep writing as frequently as of late. I shall do my best on this score too. One thing I need never worry about is lack of subject matter. I can't quite understand why I should be expected to see Joe. To my mind it would be a mere stroke of good fortune if it so happened. I shall, however, make every effort to get in touch with him by mail.

Let me tell you of my last week, for it was an exceptionally interesting and enjoyable one. On Tuesday evening a telephone message came for me to leave for the big city next morning at 5:45 A.M., there to locate X airplanes, have them moved to certain hangars and in every way prepare for flight. When they were ready I should telephone down for the required number of pilots.

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Wednesday I spent in looking after the planes and getting them ready. Next morning some of the pilots arrived, but the weather was very bad, as was Friday likewise. During those two days I shopped busily, doing countless errands and buying some much needed clothes and shoes for myself. Seth Low, George Turnure and I had tea with Mr. Sherrard Billings on Friday and found him enthusiastic over the prospect of his work. I called on Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who was out. I saw Hobey Baker, Charlie Reed, Jim Miller, Stuart Wing and other friends, all there for one purpose or another, but not on leave, as that city is banned for men on leave now.

I should add that during these two days I bought, pasted together and industriously studied the maps of our homeward journey in order to avoid a repetition of my first experience in cross-country flying!

Saturday morning was fine and clear, though it had clouded over considerably by the time we had the machines under way. I started out first and circled over the field for half an hour waiting for the others, and finally in disgust started out alone. The wind was directly against us, so we agreed to descend at E—— to get our tanks filled

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up and to have lunch. The others arrived soon after I had landed, except that two of them had trouble at the start, which kept them back. At two o'clock we started out in groups of three, and we landed safe and sound here at four within a few minutes of each other. Here let me state with great self-satisfaction that I had estimated the distance in miles of each town en route and the time it should take to pass over each one. And my calculations proved very nearly correct. I am at last taking a real interest in maps! It's quite necessary.

I revert again to the city, for I find I forgot to mention the recent raid of which you will have doubtless read. I saw where one bomb had squarely hit a house and demolished the upper two stories. At that rate it would take a powerful lot of bombs to do any real damage. I also saw the top of a lamp-post knocked over by the poor pilot who landed in the Place de la Concorde! On all the deep subway stations are illuminated *Abri* signs, and in the papers you read of advertisements of firms willing to install concrete *abris* in your cellar for a consideration. All the works of art which might be in danger are being carefully protected by sandbags held in place by

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wooden staging. The people are furious about it (the raid).

Home again I find Eddie Bates cheerful and playing cards, Quentin busy writing letters. The other boys whom you know are no longer here. I find a lot of work awaiting me in the shape of planes to be tested and many others to have diagnoses passed upon them. I am a sort of consulting airplane surgeon at the outlying field. It really seems pretty hard that a job which I walked into of my own accord nearly two months ago should now hold me here almost indefinitely. In fact, they tell me there is no chance of my going to the Front for four or five months. They seem to think I have a sensitive touch or something that not everybody else does have, but I call it merely an interest to have more than a merely superficial knowledge of the planes we are to use in battle. Being by nature suspicious, I seem to have an eye for little details such as missing bolts, cotter pins, warped wings, etc. It really is pretty hard that I should be held back when my ambition is to scrap and anyone who takes an interest in airplanes can, I think, pick up what little I know in a short time. Men I mean who have not been here since Oct. 8 and

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who therefore are due to serve their turn at some kind of school work. I guess the best way to look at it is that we are Uncle Sam's property and that he uses us where we can be of most use. As long as we are useful we should feel satisfied, I suppose. And it isn't always pure good fun when you find ramshackle planes such as these. And I do feel sure that, without at least a partially trained eye overseeing the planes here, there would soon be some nasty accidents, for I have already condemned several planes in regular use. It is a great experience and interesting work anyway, and one ought to have something to show for such good training as I had under that great French tester: he is a wonder.

Good bye, dear P. A., with loads of love to all,
HAM.

February 13th

DEAR ROGER,

It's a very foggy, drizzly morning so I don't have to be on the job — hence the letter to you.

My job is testing airplanes now and it's a pretty interesting one: only when you have to fly old junks that tip way over on one side, or ones with weak wings that make queer noises sometimes, it

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isn't half as much fun as it might be. Unfortunately, I have been shifted over to another field not far from the first one for the purpose of testing all the old machines that are on the blink and getting them right. One good thing about it is that I get a *lot* of flying and experience that will be of use when I get to the front.

They treat me well over here. I have my own room with a little coal stove; also a swell little gasoline stove to cook stuff on. I have a well equipped larder with eggs, cocoa, coffee, sardines, chocolate, etc., in it, so I generally cook my breakfast right here in my room, which is a great convenience.

Your young eyes would pop out of your head, if you could see some of the latest war airplanes performing. They go like streaks of lightning and can do any acrobatics you ever heard of.

Best love, feller,

Yours,

HAM.

February 21

DEAR ROGER,

E. has just written saying that no one heard from me between Dec. 12th and Jan. 13th. As

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a matter of fact I wrote many letters between those dates and never have let a week pass without writing to at least some of my family.

I just figured out today that on every good day I travel about four hundred miles! Only I never go more than a mile or two from the field, when testing airplanes. Most of the ones I have go about 120 miles an hour! It does seem funny though to cover that much ground every day and yet never leave the vicinity of the camp for any distance.

I seem to be hopelessly stuck in this job of testing with small chance of getting to the front for a while. All the more so now because the French tester who taught me how to test airplanes was killed yesterday doing a barrel loop too close to the ground. It was a rotten accident, especially because he was one of the best pilots in France and very valuable as a tester. I shall be very careful not to do any acrobatics near the ground, you bet. I won't even try any more fancy landings, because the last time I tried one I didn't get away with it! — but stalled and pancaked 30 feet, bending the axles and both wheels perfectly flat. Golly, I felt like a boob! Yesterday I "attacked" a Spad that hovered over our camp

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insultingly, and we had an exciting "combat" for several minutes. I could have shot him up because I managed to keep above and behind him all the time. Finally he beat it off for the main camp. It is true that ordinarily he could have beaten me up with that machine, but his was an old one and pretty well shot.

It looks like a good day for tomorrow, so I had better go to bed early tonight.

So long, old boy, be good.

Yours, HAM.

Sunday, February 17, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

I'm sitting in a deserted barrack tonight, for once again for the *n*-th time I've had the experience of seeing classes with my friends along, graduate and go sailing ahead to the place where all roads lead (eventually), and where I'd give anything to be myself. . . .

I must tell you of my delightful week-end. Quentin knows a very nice family of French people at R——* about thirty miles from here. They call themselves Normant and manufacture cloth for the French government on a large scale.

* Romorantin.

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Yesterday afternoon we took a couple of planes, stuck our bags in beside the seats and breezed on over there, arriving fifteen minutes later. They have a palatial house, and are *dears*. We had a huge room, nice soft beds, and a real American-type tile bath-room to ourselves. It certainly sets one up after this crude life here. Major Grow was likewise staying there. They are a typical French family of the upper class though strangely like some American families we know, in their informality and hospitality.

We started back at three this P.M. each with a newly acquired box of candy and a large cake, and found the usual Sunday afternoon crowd hanging around the flying field. We took off together and "showed off" mildly by chasing each other and doing a few stunts, because the French would be almost hurt if a visiting pilot doesn't do some stunts, but out of deference for the aged and none too solid condition of our planes, we refrained from doing the hair-raising *vrille* or *tonneau*. Coming back we throttled down and just splurged about like two young dolphins. Those are the times when flying is a glorious sport. On my test flights I merely circle the field, carefully feeling out the actions of

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my plane and never appreciating the joy of it. *Pannes* are frequent of course, when one tests ten or fifteen planes a day, but they usually involve little more than a tedious wait till a truck arrives with mechanics and spare parts to fix the trouble or tow the plane back if badly out of kilter. I *shall* be glad when I get my own private plane, long-promised, in order to do my acrobatics, etc., with a reasonable feeling of assurance that it is strong and that no one else has been putting it to undue strains. Twice, thus far, I have had ribs or motor parts of wings crack with a loud snarl when flying stunts; it is disconcerting and makes one more cautious. However it is mighty hard to convince other people when to do things and when not to. All I can do is to say that certain things should not be done on certain planes; then if people do them, my responsibility ends. So far not an accident has occurred through breakage in the air; a thing that is miraculous to me after some of the things I have seen in my department in two short months.

Just got a good letter from Charlie Fuller in Scotland, doing naval aviation patrol work. Also a short note from Cousin Arthur whom I saw, you remember, for about two minutes in Paris,

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but could not locate again. As for the war, Mummy, who knows? They talk a lot, but one man's gossip is as bad as another's. The thing is to plug ahead indefinitely, then if the war does suddenly stop, be surprised!

I can't say how many Americans are here at the front or behind, whether or not the Germans are feared in the coming drive, what condition the supplies seem to be in, or anything else about the old war. You must understand that we can say practically nothing if we are to live up to censorship regulations.

Practically all my Technology friends and the others with whom I came over, have gone on through the course here and left. Quentin is about the only old friend here and he is a real one.

Your

HAM.

[*Issoudun*] Feb. 18th

DEAR DICKIE,

I'm sitting hunched over a diminutive stove that fairly glows red in its efforts to dispel the cold night air that whistles in through cracks in floor and walls of this barrack. The situation recalls to me the descriptions I've had in Lu's

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and family letters of the fierceness of the cold at home this winter. It surely must have been pretty bad. We thought we had found Spring, but the cold came back and still persists at times.

D. D., still a cadet, has been accomplishing wonders in organizing and running efficiently the machine shop which makes repairs on broken planes and engines. It makes me laugh to have him salute me and answer "Yes, sir" when I speak to him, and then think of a time not so long ago when he was soaking me black marks at school: I, a thoroughly awe-stricken first-former! I have to keep a straight face when he salutes unless there is no one around. I guess his commission will come through fairly soon, but like countless others it has been months in the coming.

Do tell some of those over-ambitious youths that being in France doesn't mean being at the front by a long shot. I can't say I feel any nearer here than I did at Boston Tech! It's discouraging to be useful in some fool way especially when one falls into it almost by chance.

Best to Lu and the kids,
Ever your affectionate brother,
HAM.

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[*Issoudun*] Feb. 26th

DEAR LU,

You know it's funny, I spoke about feeling ready for a little leave after having flown pretty steadily since Oct. 15th. Well, it has been raining two days now and I feel the need or desire to fly about twice as strongly as I ever felt the need of rest. Such is the intoxication of it.

I've been feeling a little low this week over the departure of Q. R. (for three weeks only) and the departure of two of my testing friends in four days, for the great unknown that lies beyond. One of them was the French Lieut. of whom I must have spoken; anyway, he was an extraordinary and famous pilot, but reckless as the dickens, and that was what did for him. The other was a new tester learning the game, and probably lack of experience or caution got him. Discretion prevents me from dwelling on other accidents, and it does no good to remember them, only you can't very well help it when they are close to you in one way or another. You really get pretty callous to it all — I suppose some day we shall see friends smashed at our very feet and merely order someone to shovel it away. I wish

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they would be more careful because everyone that gets killed makes one less, and therefore makes it the more imperative for those who are here to stay here as testers instead of going to the front.

France is a quaint and delightful place when you have time to appreciate it. I had time today, for I was in the side car of a motorcycle for some forty odd miles en route to another American camp which we visited and from which two of us returned this afternoon. Quaint is certainly a just term for it — what else could you say when you see a large white horse and a tiny brown donkey harnessed together to an old-fashioned plow with wheels? Then every town through which you pass has some of those wonderful unsymmetrical tumble-down houses of stone and tile, overgrown with ivy and ages old houses all huddled together, with occasional street lamps projecting out on those fine old ironwork brackets, little kids, dogs, cats and chickens running round the streets, and then the invariable two-wheeled wagons with horses arranged in tandem.

In some of the towns through which we passed were American soldiers, and one of the things that

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strikes you most is the way they get on with the children. Walking down the road we saw a burly U. S. private with a tiny kid clinging to each of his husky hands, and three more marching stiff and straight behind him as proud and happy as little peacocks trailing after a large uncle peacock. Further on a particularly tall soldier was standing on a street corner doling out pieces of candy to about fifty young kiddoes who screamed and scrapped and clamored to get near him. At every turn of the road we seemed suddenly to come on little bunches of children who invariably rushed out to the roadside, hands in air, shouting, "Good morning" or "Good night," thus much have they learned of the English language. Gosh, it's a wonderful place; the people are so entirely picturesque and slow and cheerful. As a matter of fact, about nine-tenths of the time they are artists in spite of themselves. What one of them when building a house in which the ridgepole was crooked, the sides of the roof unequal, and a little ladder reached to the loft or second story in place of stairs, would ever have dreamed that his habitation when grown old, moss-covered, and even more dilapidated, would bring delight to the eyes of a practical American,

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accustomed to precise structures of steel and concrete, to machinery, to speed and accuracy in all the ways and works of life?

Loads of love,

HAM.

Sunday, March 3

DEAREST P. A.,

I dreamed of seeing you and mother last night with a vividness that has persisted ever since. You were debarking here to do Red Cross work in Paris, and I met you at the steamer. I wish something like that might happen.

We seem to have run into a spell of bad weather, for there was regular flying but one day last week; I attempted to carry on my testing on several other occasions, but succeeded in breaking three propellers, due to mud flying off the wheels, in one morning. This week end, too, I had secured permission to take a short 'cross country flight in my plane, but a sudden snowstorm put that out of the question. I have had assigned to me a brand new, spick and span plane, for my exclusive use. On that machine only do I perform acrobatics, because the other ships are too old and out of line to be safe for this purpose. No further

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news of Joe since his first, last and only letter of two weeks ago.

Quentin has gone away to another school for about three weeks' instruction in aerial shooting. John Mitchell of Manchester is the only man I know at all at the field. We have a small but not uncomfortable room together. You see the classes come and go here so fast that you can't possibly get to know the men, and all the ones I knew graduated several months ago. On rainy days we often go over to the main camp, four miles away. There I make love to Miss Given Wilson who is head of all Red Cross activities at this Center, and a perfect dear. It is wonderful what they have done here. They started with a small canteen. They now have an officers' mess for the whole camp, and an officers' sitting room fitted up comfortably and attractively, large kitchens which not only take care of the mess but also work with the hospital in supplying special food to men who are sick or on diet and perhaps the most important of all is a large Red Cross bath house equipped with hot showers, clothes sterilizers, etc., and which can care for several hundred men in an afternoon. Really those women have changed the whole atmosphere

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of the camp, and are doing an enormous amount of good, as much by their cheerful presence as by their good works.

Did you ever get the painting I sent some time ago? It was a rather striking one representing a French plane following a German victim down as a cat watches a wounded mouse. It ought to be interesting because it was made by an artist here who has seen it all with his own eyes and paints it from the airman's point of view. The ground is just as it appears to us at ten or twelve thousand feet. Do let me know if you get it safely.

Best love to all,

H.

Monday, Mar. 4, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

Your dear letter from Squam Feb. 9 has just arrived. . . . Squam certainly is a wonderful place; it's refreshing merely to think of it, but always when I think it over it is our being together there that has made it so attractive. The mention of almost any spot there brings back most vivid memories of a picnic, a camping-trip or merely a happy existence with the "gang."

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A funny incident occurred this afternoon which I consider worth narrating: — A group of Boche prisoners were at work levelling one end of the flying field at the time the last patrol was returning. The wind was such that the men had to pass right over them (the Boches) on the glide down. Well, one of the pilots, thinking more of the hot supper that awaited him than of the manner of his landing, misjudged his distance and came whistling down over the toiling Germans, about *four* feet high. One Boche, right in his way, saw him coming just in time to fall flat on his face to avoid being hit. Everybody roared it was so funny, except the poor Boche who got up shaking his fist at the distant pilot. He evidently thought it was a carefully planned insult prompted by HATE, but I know enough of the pilot to feel assured that it was a pure accident. I don't think he even knew they were Boches. Incidentally, the German prisoners here are treated very humanely according to my way of thinking.

I keep on testing and testing these old rattle-traps, and have acquired an awful keen eye for little details such as missing cotter pins, safety wires, lock washers, etc. Yes, these buses here have seen service and are all just as greasy and

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grimy as they can be, but always just as I begin to get disgusted with them, I take a glance back over my shoulder to the hangar door, where stands my *private* 'plane, *brand* new, spotless, and fairly glistening with the extra coat of varnish, and I think of the fun of riding in her, of doing loops and barrels and renversements and sideslips to my heart's content, and being able to feel confident in the strength of its wings, which is more than I can say for the others.

I must turn in now, dear Mammy, though I fear the snow now falling will continue and make unnecessary the early start for which I'm preparing.

Bestest love,
Your
H.

[*Issoudun*], *Field No. 7, March 18*

DEAREST MOTHER,

I missed my Sunday letter yesterday because I was at Mme. Normant's hospitable mansion with Cord Meyer. We flew up yesterday morning, landing at the government house near their house. These little week-end parties are about the only diversion, and I can't tell you how nice

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those people are. You would appreciate Mme. Normant immensely, I think. She is just as jolly as she can be and so motherly to us boys, and always when we leave she gives us each a package of apples, nuts, or bonbons which tuck easily away in our planes.

I must tell you about the excitement here Saturday but cannot tell you the cause of it. Perhaps you can guess when I tell you that it was a little like Prize-Day at Groton (except for the prizes) everybody shined up to look his, her, or its bestest. I was one of five in an acrobatic formation. When the formation broke up we all did every stunt we could think of. I looped, turned, and twisted so much that my judgment of distances was distorted, and I broke the axle of my darling on landing. There were formations, combats, and exhibitions for nearly two hours. Just as we came down from our stunt one of the apprentice testers went up, and started to do foolish stunts *close to the ground*. He didn't last long. About two minutes after going up he stalled his machine without sufficient altitude in which to save himself, and he came sizzling down, hitting the ground like a rocket, head-first. He is still alive, Mammy, but never will be worth

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much if he does live. It was pretty sickening, happening right before our eyes, especially when we could see it coming. Another tester gone, so tonight Maj.— tells me that I am now to test all machines at another field in addition to the job here. It simply means doing half a job at each place. Also at the other field there is a green bunch of mechanics who thought a week ago that they knew it all and didn't at all like taking advice from other people. Now they have discovered that they don't know it all, and are a bunch of lambs but that doesn't alter the fact that they are green. It's rather uncomfortable work testing planes that have been lined up by green men. Darn those testers for getting smashed up! It makes it so hard for the few that are left. And as for chances of ever getting leave or getting to the front — well I just don't think about them any more.

Today we had the Red Cross directress, Miss Irene Given Wilson, over to lunch, and behaved our prettiest in the hope that she might see fit to establish a miniature canteen here, modeled after the *splendid* establishment at the main camp. It really would be great, as we have practically no cosy place to sit round in and chat or

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write letters. The Y. M. C. A. provides good movies and entertainments but it is used almost exclusively by the enlisted men as a lounging place, and besides it is so much like a large barn. I tell you, it's the feminine touch that makes the difference. A few table covers, cushions, and cheerful chintz curtains make a world of difference, but the Y. M. C. A. never has those little touches.

I'm a powerful tired fellow these evenings, but if they keep on treating me the way they have been, I'll keep on going till I drop. That is one great thing about this job. I am practically my own boss, attend no formations, and use my own judgment about when to fly and when not to. I have my own machine, and they are very reasonable about letting me take short cross-country flights on Sundays. All I have to do is to do my job the best I know how. Several would-be testers found this freedom a little too much for them and they are no longer testers.

I'm looking forward to more letters soon, but have no complaints about the way you have been writing lately; keep them coming, though, won't you?

Your loving

HAM.

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[*Issoudun*] March 26

DEAR LU,

Just to show how far I have gone on my downward path I'll tell you that it is too cloudy and windy to test this morning and then I'll add, — thank Heavens! I honestly don't feel that way about flying; I love it just as much as ever, but gosh, I am pretty tired if I do say so. It's the same story day after day — out of one plane and into another, gathering a little more grime and grease each time. Sometimes the old ships aren't any too easy to handle because the matter of adjusting them is largely by the trial and error method. When the error predominates you become aware of the fact only when you have jumped irretrievably into the air. Then you have a rather uncomfy few minutes until you have completed your "tour de piste" and are once more safely on mother earth. Of course that only happens occasionally — most of the trips run off smoothly as can be and I can get fairly good results now by dint of a few hundred wrong guesses in time past.

Q. came back last night with a heavy cold as usual, but it certainly is good to see him again.

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There are about five of us who are darn good friends here and we always assemble after meals in the captain's room to talk or play the phonograph. There is one advantage to the strenuous life and that is that they treat me very well, and not like a kid any more, thank goodness. I have my own plane and can get permission to fly almost anywhere within range on Saturday afternoons, returning Sunday P.M. I seldom go far on these occasions as the average week provides enough flying—but it is good to get away.

The front seems as remote as ever. They need all the pilots they can get there yet I seem to be stuck here. For some reasons new testers don't seem to materialize very fast or they get hurt or something and there is an ever-increasing number of planes that need testing. However, I hope either to be sent to the front as a member of the staff for a month or so or else permanently assigned to a squadron a little later, possibly by June. "Barrack-room flying" has started in and writing is consequently hopeless so I stop now.

Your affectionate brother,

HAM.

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Easter Sunday, March 31

DEAREST MOTHER,

It seems absurd to discuss such insignificant things as our little private doings here when this terrific drive is going on, but I absolutely cannot say anything about it that I should like to say, Suffice it though, that the work of the French and British Flying Corps in dispersing infantry attacks sends little thrills up my spine every time I think of it, and makes me more impatient than ever before to get up there and into the *mélée*. Naturally I have had a lot of experience by now, since I average from ten to thirty flights a day, but I rap on wood as I say it, because a man could fly until Doomsday and there would still be left many things for him to learn. I look back on these months of testing with a spirit of humble thankfulness in my soul, for I have certainly had splendid good luck all through and have fared better than many of my comrades! I remain most humble in my outlook for the future, knowing that my fate is written and that there is nothing to worry about. I have acquired sufficient skill to avoid the primary blunders (thus far) but beyond that all is sheer luck.

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Yesterday Q. and I sailed up to the Normants! Side by side we flew in our little buses, making faces at each other occasionally just for amusement. Golly its fun, mammy! They always meet us at the field in their auto and take us to the house not much over a mile away. We spend a glorious, peaceful day there. This afternoon we all took bikes and rode out to look at a superb little chateau belonging to an Aunt. The chateau is of the 15th century. It is a diminutive affair, but the most perfect specimen imaginable! It is surrounded by a moat, has a fine little stone bridge over it, with the family crest carved on the key of the arch. At the end of the bridge is a restored gateway leading to the court. On two sides of this are the wings of the chateau, on the other two a wall, to keep kids from falling into the moat. The chateau itself is of solid stone exterior, with towers at the corners. Inside you see those grand old ceilings of hand-hewn beams, tiled floors, and very pure renaissance furniture.

Back we came this afternoon about 5:30 dodging ominous storm clouds all the way and now, after supper, there is a service in the Y.M.C.A. I think I'll look it over, though I seldom get up much enthusiasm over them ordinarily. That is

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reserved for the memories of the recent past and for what the near future has in store.

Your loving son,

HAM.

P. S. Quentin sends his love.

April 3, 1918

DEAR P. A.,

Yesterday I flew a monoplane of the latest type. It is faster than the best of the type you recently questioned me about, and so sensitive I felt that a sudden sneeze on my part would upset the craft. It felt as though I were clinging to the back end of a sky-rocket! It climbed at about the same angle, though probably at greater speed. The wings seemed scarcely worthy of the name; one was only conscious of the great power of the motor, and terrific speed it gave the little bus.

Did I tell you that Joe has written me again and that I know his location, though he made no mention of it! He is, however, inaccessible by *avion* according to my present Saturday afternoon radius of action.

The testing work continues. Rainy days have recently given me a chance to rest up and do a little reading and letter writing. I'm lying low

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until I see the right time to ask for that welcome leave. In between times I use the machine gun, do trap-shooting and read about the care and maintenance of different types of planes and motors I shall be apt to come upon. It's all fascinating as ever my boyish imagination pictured it might be. A dream come true, an ambition at least partially fulfilled. It was a relief to find that I could "get away" with piloting that monoplane, because it is the equal of any airplane in point of speed and rate of climb. No other plane is any more sensitive or difficult to handle (though this was not difficult) as far as I can gather from those who profess to know. It's just a question of patient waiting until the time comes when at last I can go, in the meantime gaining all possible information and experience that will be of use when that time comes.

Your loving HAM.

[*Issoudun*], April 9th

DEAR OLD LU,

Your slob of a brother once more steps into the breach after a long hiatus; I've forgotten just how long, but have a feeling it's over two weeks since I last wrote. Let's see, what's the news?

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There isn't any. Our life here rolls on true to the popular conception of an aviator's life as voiced by the R. F. C. pilot who said, "The life of an aviator is one of ease (comparative), and luxury (ditto), punctuated by moments of intense fear." I experienced one of the latter yesterday afternoon, but, as usual, only after it was all over and there was nothing to worry about. I had just made a landing and was taxiing peacefully back to my starting line when a sudden roar made me realize that something wasn't quite right. There about twenty feet in front of me was an airplane, tail up, throttle wide open, charging straight at me. I ducked my head at the instant the thing shot over me missing my bus by a matter of inches. It was then that I sort of wilted for a few minutes. But here I still am alive and kicking. You see it is an inviolable rule that the man who is about to "take off" assures himself that the field is clear ahead, because of course a bus slowly taxiing can't possibly hope to dodge a plane tearing along at about seventy miles an hour. He "misunderstood" a mechanic's signal or forgot to look or something. Golly!

I still have to smile every time I think of these

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week-ends when little Hi takes his \$8000 private plane for a little "airing" at Uncle Sam's expense. My own monogram is on its side and the cockpit is arranged in my own pet way — here a shelf on which to put bag and light refreshments for the tedious journey, there an extra cushion for my poor back. I almost fell out one day doing a loop when the plane decided to give up the struggle at the precise moment it assumed an upside down position. I have therefore special handles to cling to in such emergencies for the safety belt has a patent clasp which can't be trusted. It has a way of coming undone at the crucial moment, usually the only moment when the old belt could possibly be of any use. Oh, and I'm having the ship painted a very smart buff color, sort of a rich jersey cream idea, instead of the regular dingy grey. Our private limousines must have a touch of the *distingué*, you know—!

You can imagine how I feel at getting letters from some of my old crowd now *at* the front and describing adventures over the lines. My prospects are pretty bright though, because they have promised to let me go "soon." Non-committal but somewhat reassuring.

Your aff. brother, HAM.

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Sunday, April 14

DEAREST MOTHER,

This Sunday we are residing peacefully at camp as the rain spoiled our week-end flight. Last night by way of diversion Q., Mac, the doctor, and I had a sumptuous dinner at the "Palace of Sweets" down town. It works out rather well because by over-eating enormously one removes all desire for the Sunday morning meal which comes at the disconcerting hour of seven-thirty!

What do you think I've been doing this week? Testing planes, just like every other week for the last four months! I do seem to live with a horse-shoe around my neck, though. It's all luck and God's good-will whether one lives or dies, so why worry, that's the way I look at it. Only yesterday I had just come down from testing a plane for acrobatics by doing all the regular stunts, ending with the spinning dive known as a "vrille." As the ship rested on the ground a puff of wind hit the rudder and it came unstuck! The hinge was carelessly welded on. Heaven only knows why it waited till I came down before coming off. That's only one of the six cases like it, but it illustrates the kind of incident that develops a

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fatalistic point of view and strangely enough it has just the opposite effect of making one worry. It merely inspires a calm feeling of dependence on one's Maker!

Just before starting out for one of my trips yesterday a mechanic said, "There are two lieutenants out there in front of you, sir." I noticed that one of them was friend Q., so I cheerfully thumbed my nose as I shot by them on my *dé-collage*. I only learned after coming down that the other "lieutenant" was in reality Major S——! Much worried I hastily sought out Q. to determine the Major's feelings on the subject. "Oh, he only laughed," said Q., "and said, 'I guess that's meant for you, isn't it?'" You see, he knew we were pretty good friends.

Q. seems to figure in almost every amusing incident that happens to me. Last Tuesday I got permission to try the little monoplane again. Thinking to make a big impression (because this monoplane commands attention wherever it goes) I headed straight for here, our outlying field. As I drew near I spotted Q. in his gaudily decorated plane, circling around a toy balloon up over the field, so of course I sailed up to say hello. Just as I got close, however, he turned his attention

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from the toy balloon, flipped over on his back and came diving down on me in attack. That possibility hadn't occurred to me, but one must never refuse a combat, so I hastened to manœuvre for position. Well it is commonly known that the mono is far superior here to all the other planes in speed, climb and manœuvre ability, but as it was only my second trip in the little devil and as it is a *very* sensitive *appareil*, demanding skilful handling, I didn't *dare* to whisk it around in the slap-dash manner that would have saved the situation, and consequently I was ignominiously defeated in the fight! Now my chances of revenge are poor because another pilot has since wrecked the little plane. It's a hard life.

Last Sunday a boy coming over from the main camp said that a cousin of mine had just come to the Y. M. C. A. Her name is Miss Mary Curtis, bright red hair, with a disposition and atmosphere about her just as bright. Yesterday several of us had tea with her here. It seems funny to have to come to France to meet one's cousins. She's very attractive (you probably know her), and I foresee that we shall have grand gossipy talks about all the goings on in the Big City. Also she seems very pleased with the

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Transcripts which I hand on. The men all like her so well too — why don't they send more of her style instead of some of the others? I'm a cat — because they *all* do such good work.

Yesterday Q. and I once more attacked the Major on the subject of getting out to the front. Well, a rather discouraging circumstance renders it useless just now, so there's obviously nothing to do but wait in patience.

Sunday, April 21

DEAREST MOTHER,

When I got back this evening I found a letter from my old friend Doug Campbell awaiting me, and I'm going to quote you what I consider a pretty thrilling little episode: — "Yesterday morning the wildest and least expected thing in my life and the history of aviation took place right here. It was our first day of regular work since coming to this camp, and Alan —— and I were "on alert" from 6 to 10 A.M. At 8.45 a telephone message stated that two Boches had been seen not far from here, coming this way, and at 8.50 I took off. I had reached 500 meters and was just about to fall in behind Alan when I saw him *pique* on a machine flying at 300 m. It

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was a Boche, an Albatross D 5. I viraged to see better and to help if necessary, and just as I did so I heard the pop-pop of a machine gun. Another Albatross was piquing on me out of a cloud, and was 150 meters away. I kept below him while manœuvring, and it took over a minute to get a good position. I found myself underneath him going in the same direction, and, forgetting I was only 200 meters from the ground, I stood the bus on its tail (i.e. pointed her nose straight upwards — H. C.) and shot from below. I think I hit his motor for the next thing I knew, he was piquing and I was on his tail at 100 meters distance. Pulling heavily on the trigger, I let him have some 50 rounds and stopped when I saw his fuselage ablaze. He landed 500 meters from my hangar, and capoted in a mass of flame and wreckage, but the pilot was thrown clear. Alan —— brought his Boche down 200 meters from the other side of the aerodrome, but without burning it. He got lots of interesting instruments, spark plugs, magneto (Bosch) and other things out of it. Aren't we two of the luckiest damn fools that ever happened? The machines, or rather what was left of them, were taken to Toul and set up in the square. Major H——

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trotted us down to the celebration in the afternoon with the result that we now own the town. All yesterday and today we have been receiving reporters; we are seriously thinking of making the story into a phonograph record!"

What do you think of that? Did you ever read a more vivid account of an aerial combat and doesn't it thrill you? It certainly affects me that way, so can you blame me for being restless in this old joint? Then knowing Doug so well brings that home. If they ever need recruits for aviation I bet the publication of that letter would land a lot. It was a remarkable performance because Doug nailed his man from an unfavorable position. The advantage was all in the Boche's favor, being above and having surprised him, but Doug's skill in manœuvring and his good eye were what did the trick. Another phase of the story came out in the papers. One of the mechanics who was watching the combat got hit in the ear with a bullet, and he's so pleased with himself he doesn't know what to do. "He regards his ear as a great souvenir," says Doug.

I'm not exactly tired because many rainy days give me rest, but I do feel a trifle stale with the long monotony of this place and my continual

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restlessness. My idea of Heaven right now would be that seven day's leave and then go directly to the front to get some action at last. I've learned to fly, now I want to *scrap*. I have a promising assistant tester now and am doing my best to break him in to take my place. We have some interesting new machines of the latest pattern and they let me use them any time I want or can get off, so all that is good practice.

France, April 22

DEAR ROGER,

I've just had three good letters from you and in my turn have not written for ages. You speak of filling rubber balloons with homemade hydrogen — I am doing something on the same order. One of my mechanics has made me a bunch of paper parachutes with a weight to ballast them. I take them up in my plane and throw one overboard when I get up high. Then the fun begins. I dive at it, aiming at it as if it were a Boche plane, and dodge only at the last moment. You'd be surprised how hard it is to throw it clear of the plane. Often it gets caught in the rudder or stabilizer. It is necessary to make a sharp turn and throw it in the middle of the turn. Some-

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times I chase stray peeps and that's *swell* fun, only they always dodge just as you overtake them.

I must stop now to fix up some of the rest of my family — so long, old feller — be good to yourself.

Love, HAM.

[Issoudun] April 22

MY DEAR P. A.,

Thank goodness that awful winter of yours is at last over or practically so; it must have caused a deal of suffering to all concerned. Crude oil must have received manifold blessings those icy days! Even now I willingly light my little stove in the evenings, and wear my "teddy bear" suit (fur lined) for my early flights, substituting for it a light gingham combination when the sun gets warm later in the day. We've been having rotten weather for flying. Rain, strong wind, clouds, and continual mist and fog. One poor boy lost his life Saturday when fog shut in so suddenly that he was caught unaware and could not see the ground. He crashed blindly into a tree and lost the top of his head.

P. A. why not write Mrs. Benjamin Normant? She has done so much for me and would be very pleased to hear from a grateful father. M. Nor-

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mant is an invalid, so it is Mrs. that we know really well. They own a large factory and much land upon which the American government constructs large camps, and they know all the American officers. Quentin makes a great hit with her in particular (Mme. N.) The French language proves not the slightest barrier to his irrepressible sense of humor and his personality is almost as marked as his father's. Quentin stays here as officer in charge of flying and is as restless as I am.

I sometimes regret my course of action in having deliberately rejected the job of chief tester of the 3rd Aviation Instruction Centre at the main field, a job which was open to me a month ago when my senior tester left for other parts. It nearly makes me weep when the French mechanics there continually ask about me and if I'm not coming back there. You see I was the only tester who could speak any French at the time, and they felt that I appreciated their experience and work, the former much greater than that of their American comrades at the same work. I was able too, to play the diplomat and allay misunderstandings, only too frequent, between them and the American mechanics.

Here I have about eight mechanics in my test-

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ing dept. and we are firm friends, though an anonymous letter I found a few days ago would lead me to believe that perhaps all the other mechanics don't feel the same way towards me. The letter reads about as follows:

LIEUT. COOLIDGE — *Tester.*

Sir, As a man that wants to see fair play I feel it my duty to warn you that Sergeant X—— is out to get your life. I have already spoiled his game once, but after this it will be your funeral, not mine, so BE PREPARED!

(Signed) A FRIEND

The letter I at once turned over to the Capt. who is looking the matter up, but we attribute it to jealousy of the sergt. in question and an underhanded attempt to "get him in wrong," rather than the revelation of an insidious plot. Somehow it doesn't worry me. One chance more or less makes little difference these days. Of course I am, indeed always have been, careful about inspecting every detail of my planes for the students' sake as well as my own. I owe it to them if not to myself.

Your loving son, HAM.

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[Paris] April 30, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

What do you think of this unforeseen little spree? Q. and I are here, having flown up together last Saturday. You know the joke of the whole thing was that we never asked to come, but were just shipped off, it being impractical at the present time to grant leaves involving travel by land. So we were sent up here *en avion* to enjoy life for about a week. You can bet we are doing it. Q. is staying at his sister's apartment, I at a very swank hotel doling out much moneys, but making up for lots of discomforts and inconveniences in a short time. I went to "Faust" last night and enjoyed it immensely.

I dined with Q. and his sister today, and afterwards we wandered down through the old city. Sainte Geneviève we found particularly beautiful inside. Golly I wish I knew more of the history of these wonderful old places and buildings one finds everywhere, because I love and admire them for their intrinsic beauty without being able to appreciate their historic significance. I always was a perfect thick-head at history — now of course I'm mightily regretting it.

This really is a delightful change and I do think

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we both needed it pretty badly. After this we will probably be able to stick it out till we go to the front if that event ever does come to pass.

We had a grand trip up, flying side by side in our special planes. Mine has a new motor presented by a friend of mine who runs the machine shop, so it is the more agreeable to ride in. We dodged in and out of clouds all the way up and just at the end ran through a rain storm. Wow! but things are expensive these days! Actually a good meal in one of the well-known restaurants costs about forty francs or so without wine.

Loads of love,

YOUR HAM.

[*Issoudun*] *Friday, May 3*

DEAR P. A.,

I feel as if I were walking on air, having ridden on it for two delightful hours this afternoon on my way down from Paris with Q., and finding on my table a *pile* of letters from home, quantities of shaving cream and toothpaste (enough to carry the Allied forces through the spring drive), and a box of cigarettes from Mrs. Arthur Richmond. Golly! it was a refreshing week, as much for the change of scene and people as for the complete

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relaxation from this job. Did I tell you of dining, quite by chance, with the Commanding General of the Air Service, and learning loads of interesting (though not too encouraging) news of our branch of the service? It gave me a chance, too, to slide in a word or two for two poor fellers who had been held back at their flying school some five months after finishing their course! I had a delicious time, saw some nice people, and spent much precious money! — but the justification is, that so complete a change has set me all up again and now I'm ready to go at it again, this time in the belief that the end of our troubles here is within sight. I cannot say what I should like to say about the chief reason for our delay.

You can't imagine the sensations of flying over that wonderful city, and how intensely you listen to the hum of your motor. The slightest irregularity in its soothing purr causes you to crane your neck over the side of the fuselage and say to yourself, "Yes, there are the Jardins des Tuileries, Luxembourg, and the Place de la Concorde — I wonder which would be the softest spot to come down in?" But in a minute you realize that it was but the working of your imagination — the motor is running quite smoothly, and you can go

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ahead enjoying it all. Then there is Q. who has pulled away from you a bit and you must catch up to him; two is company in the air as well as on earth.

Much love, H.

[Issoudun] Sunday, May 5th, 1918

DEAREST LU,

On my return from Paris a few days ago I found two swell old letters from you, the first, in fact, for ages, so now things are all cheerful again. I can say that I was in Paris since my trip had no military significance whatever.

We had a perfectly *swell* time there as you can imagine. Q. stayed at his sister-in-law's (Mrs. T. R., Jr.) and I at the Hotel Meurice in a palatial apartment with bath, costing *beaucoup* francs a day. I saw Q. all the time and his sister several times. I dined at their house and we had lunch together often. Archie R. I saw too, not looking too well after his wounds, but obstinately persistent none the less. It appears that he gave a pretty superb exhibition up there. Kept on scrapping after one wound until a second (in the knee) put him out two hours later. He then stayed until he had given all instructions, orders,

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etc., and proceeded to the hospital. Twice on the way shells scared away the stretcher-bearers, who dropped him, only returning when A. casually remarked that he thought it was safe for them to take him on again. It was 14 hours before he got to the hospital.

I've got to stop now and get to bed before those beastly lights go out — and I've said nothing so you can expect to hear again soon.

Loads of love,
HAM.

Monday, May 13

MOTHER DEAR,

I have more adventures to relate, though this time the *dénouement* did not occur against a pear tree in the back yard of a chateau! Saturday P.M. I flew to the town [Tours] near which I had my old smash-up which you will perhaps recall — to see our cousin, Maj. Arthur D. Hill. The trip down was without particular incident. I followed a river so as not to get lost and had no trouble till the very end, when a heavy fog made it very difficult to locate the *champ d'aviation*, and necessitated flying over the city at a height of two hundred meters, when one ought to fly

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at a thousand or more. Cousin Arthur was busy that evening, but we had breakfast Sunday morning, afterwards walking together all around the town and seeing some pretty splendid old buildings. It was great to see him and have a good old chat after missing him in Paris some months ago. He is looking well, and has an absorbingly interesting and busy job.

The weather looked punk in the early afternoon, raining occasionally and always overcast and misty, but about four o'clock I decided to walk out to the field and at least go up for a look at the atmosphere. I found it very hazy, but it did not look particularly threatening, so I started out homeward bound, following the river like a guiding star. It was about time to leave the river and fly across country for a short distance to the camp, when I ran into a series of the fiercest storms imaginable. It was discouraging; I could hardly see a foot ahead of me and to see the ground at all I had to fly at about 100 meters. It was obvious that there was nothing to do but come down. Luckily I saw a small though quite level field near a road and farmhouse, and this time, *mirabile dictu*, I landed neatly in the middle without hitting the fringing trees! Well, in two

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minutes the hubbub began. Little kids, old men, and women came running from all directions. A pathetic-looking old man came up to me, exclaiming that, as I had landed in his pet oatfield, all the people would come tramping out and spoil his crop. Could I not move on to another field? I explained to him that under the circumstances it was impractical. He seemed resigned and posted himself *au milieu*, swearing loud reproaches and threats at any who attempted to cross his fence. He stayed there till dark (about two hours), when a guard became unnecessary. I proceeded to the little village, found the telephone office closed, thence hunted up the Mayor whom I finally located in the bar, making merry with his comrades. We discussed the matter and it turned out that while I had landed near the town, my plane was actually in the next commune. To get a guard for it, it would be necessary to walk to a town some ten or fifteen kilometers away, so I decided it was "*pas la peine*." The poor man was mortally offended when I would not accept a glass of cognac, but a single test assured me long ago that the stuff is nothing but a form of liquid fire and never intended for human consumption. Back I trotted to the farm house,

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escorted by a mob of excited kids. My hostess was a middle-aged farmer's widow — rather a pathetic person, but full of hospitality. She had one son about Olly's age, and two very cunning little kids about nine and ten respectively, named Edouard and Suzanne. The kitchen delighted my soul. It was a spotless room with a tiled floor. On one side a huge open fire-place where the supper was cooking and a black and white cat was snoozing, perched upon a sort of a little stool, her exclusive property. Beside the fire-place was a quite modern stove with polished nickel trimmings (obviously the proudest possession of the household), but which, the *Madame* explained, was no longer in operation on account of coal shortage. In a corner stood a grandfather's clock, old as Methuselah, but actually going. On the wall opposite the fire-place was an array of those wonderful burnished copper pots, ranged according to size.

Dinner was a grand occasion. One of the neighbor's kids was invited and once again I was thankful for being able to keep up at least an understandable conversation in French. I was the guest of honor seated in one of the parlor chairs with leather seat and back as distinguished from

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the other plain wooden ones! We were at table from eight till nearly eleven o'clock, for after the eating was finished two neighbors of the madame's came in and the drinking began. I was exhausted but stuck to my post bravely, drinking a little rather poor *vin rouge* and some very good cider. They gave me a spotless little room with a huge mahogany bed, the equal of which I have never seen. It had three eiderdown mattresses and clean sheets, so I slept like a log.

This morning I bade them a fond farewell, and struggled to start my motor till I felt like busting. The motor is of a hundred and twenty horsepower and ordinarily two mechanics crank it, so you can imagine it was a job for one pilot (the few onlookers would not touch the thing). It finally did go, however, and after getting hopelessly lost in some mist that sprang up, I finally picked up a railroad that seemed to go in the right direction, and a few minutes later saw on the horizon the two friendly chimneys of the brewery in our "home town." I now have a heavy cold because of the exertion of cranking that beastly motor followed by a speedy cooling-off process in the clouds, but two good letters from you and a good warm stove make everything cheerful.

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Sunday, May 19

DEAREST MOTHER,

One of the discouraging features of letter-writing is that when one finally does have a little news of considerable interest he may say nothing whatever! That's my predicament at this minute. The news is good, I think, and perhaps a little later we may be allowed to talk. Golly, let's see, the week has been interesting, but chiefly because of the one event above alluded to. Outside of that, just ordinary stuff. Wednesday I went up to 6000 meters just for fun and to see how the altitude would affect me. At 4000 I felt a little dizzy but that passed off quickly and all I noticed after that was the rapid breathing necessary and the intense cold. On the way down I tried an experiment. You know they say that if you ever feel that you are losing consciousness because of wounds or anything, to cut out the motor and release all controls. Well I tried it just for fun. At first the ship started gliding down, but the glide became steeper and steeper and steeper. Still I held on to myself and swore I would not touch those controls for a few seconds more. The glide had now developed into a perfectly vertical nose dive, the speed of which is

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past imagination. By this time I had become convinced that the plane would not right itself. I had dropped nearly 6000 feet, the last few thousand vertically, so I finally did take hold and drew her — oh so gently — back to the horizontal, because any sudden jerk would undoubtedly have deprived me of a pair of quite useful wings!

I'm all alone at home this boiling Sunday afternoon because I came back from the Event yesterday rather late to fly away, and this morning the fog was so thick you could cut it with a knife, so I decided to spend a lazy, peaceful day here. All the men are out playing ball — but this pastime has more attraction for one just now.

Quentin went off at 8.05 last evening and into such bad-looking weather that I had the search-lights made ready in case he should be forced to come back in the dark. I guess he made it all right though. I must write many letters, dear Mammy, so I'll close.

With best love, HAM.

Sunday, May 19th

DEAR ROGER,

I don't believe I am violating my censorship regulations when I tell you that I have seen the

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Liberty motor in action and think it looks good. Very soon I hope to fly behind it and then I can have a better chance to judge. You can be sure that I shall tell you all that is permissible about it.

I have just come down from taking a friend of mine up for his first ride in a plane. It's great fun to watch them. Some get scared every time you bank around a corner and stick their heads inside. Others are curious and look out over the side. This man sat up perfectly straight "head erect, eyes to the front." We had a fine time chasing goats in the fields and waving at all the old farmers we saw. You see we had a big, slow tub and followed good ground all the time so we could always have landed in case the motor stopped.

The weather is pretty hot now; in fact, it's just about like midsummer. Our barrack roof has seams coated with tar and this melts and drips through all over our bed and clothes and everything; gosh, it makes me wild!

Think of me when you get up to Squam, old boy. I should love to be there for a while!

Your aff. brother,

HAM.

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May 24, 1918

DEAR P. A.,

Yes, I have a little news but scarcely dare suggest its nature for fear of once again encountering a snare and a delusion. Monday next I shall go to a certain school of aerial fire to learn the niceties of combat tactics and handling the machine gun effectively. Some three weeks later if all goes well you can think of me proceeding frontwards with Q. to join a French Squadron, using a make of plane about which you once questioned me, and about which I wrote, describing it as a most agreeable plane to drive "though hardly up to the latest types." I must take back that statement, however, for the plane from which I drew my conclusion was of an obsolete model and underpowered. The new ones will be the last word in monoplace fighters with high power motors. I have a suspicion that my stay at the front will not be permanent; that their intention is to give me a taste of it and then bring me back. This does not appeal unless the taste is a prolonged one.

Your loving
HAM.

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Sunday, May 26

DEAREST MOTHER,

This is my last day of this place for a while, thank goodness! It isn't a bad place and has developed from nothing into an efficient flying school, but when one has been here some seven months always with another place in mind the strain begins to tell. I went alone to say *au-revoir* to the Normants today, Q. sailing off for Paris at an early hour.

I want to tell you a little incident of the kind that has frequently influenced me in forming an opinion of the French people, as it has to do with my departure. On occasional visits to town I always used to drop into a little grocery store to buy walnuts, chocolate (*il n'y en a plus*), etc. The store is run by an old lady, her daughter, and son of about twelve. I always chatted with them, especially the kid who seemed very interested in aviation. One day he asked me if he might come out to our field, so I wrote him out a pass that would let him through the guard line. Four successive Sundays he came without finding me, and I did not see him till he walked out (some 4 miles) one Tuesday. I showed him around, did a few stunts for him — it is forbidden

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to take up outsiders — and sent him away with some chocolate from the Y. M. C. A.

Last night finding myself in town to get my laundry, I dropped into Raymond's little *épicerie* as usual and happened to mention that I was going away. I thought nothing more about them till it was nearly ten o'clock, the time when the trucks leave the square. Then at the truck were Raymond, his mother and sister all dressed up in their best black things to see me off! I was struck dumb with surprise. The old lady almost wept when she told me how happy I had made her Raymond (it took all of 30 seconds to write out a pass for him), and after wishing me "*bonne chance*" she thrust a small package into my hands saying, "*Je les ai fait moi-même, vous pouvez les envoyer à votre mère.*" They were two hand-made doilies. I can tell you I had a lump in my throat as I climbed into the truck for camp. It's so typical of these people. Really they are wonderful; you realize it more and more as you come in contact with them. And, too, you can appreciate the psychological effect of a send-off like that. You feel as if there were nothing you wouldn't do for them.

— Pardon an interruption; a French pilot has

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just come down, and being one of the few French-speaking officers I have to play the host. It's quite noticeable that the French pilots drop in on us more and more often. Sometimes as in this case they have little or no excuse (he said his motor was not running well and there was a mist coming up), so you can safely assume that they like to do it. They find us "*très bien installés*," we have good tobacco at our Y. M. C. A., great treat to Frenchmen. Our food is good, our barracks clean and comfortable. This particular Frenchman, speaking in broken English, held an eager throng of men spell-bound last night as he told in a most natural, casual way of some of his experiences over the lines. We were at the piano in the Y. M. C. A. and he started talking to me alone, but after two minutes there was a crowd around ten deep. You could see that he was having the time of his life too, because the Frenchman likes to talk that way to admiring listeners.

Do try and locate a copy of *L'Illustration*, Mai 18, and look on page 492. There you will see a glimpse of our field with its long line of planes on dress parade, and a neat row of hangars behind. Gliding down over these hangars, in act of landing you will see a small 'bus in which

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placidly sits your son, though this most important feature of the picture is entirely too small to be recognized. I remember when the picture was taken some months ago.

Another thrilling letter from Douglas Campbell tells of his victory over his third Boche — a biplane this time, and the joke was that he had his brother out there for the day on a visit, and did it all in front of him. Together they rode out in a touring car and examined the wreck! That's the life, Mammy!

Your loving,
HAM.

AMERICAN AVIATION DETACHMENT

G. D. E.

AVIATION FRANÇAISE

PAR B. C. M.,* PARIS

June 9, 1918

DEAREST MAMMY,

From the above address you can see my situation. I am now officially attached to French Aviation. We are at a most interesting place, warming up on the types of planes we shall use

* [Bureau] [Central] [Militaire].

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at the front, while we await assignment to a French *escadrille*. I'm one of the happiest men on earth because you know of the trials and tribulations that attended my progress toward the front; I should say you know some of them, because no sooner had I left the 3rd Aviation Inst. Centre and gone to the "pool" for pilots for the front, than I was nailed for another testing job — receiving planes from the French Gov't. for the American Gov't. I raised a fearful howl and at the same time a telegram from my old C. O. requested that I be allowed to come here, . . . (next day) . . . so they finally gave in and I feel fairly secure, though of course one can never tell when their grasping claws may try to steal me back again. Quentin's here too, Mammy, the others I know but slightly. We are assigned to the *division Spad*, and must become adepts in it before being allowed to go on. Judging by the performances of the Frenchmen here on those planes I think we should make good rather quickly, because they seem rather crude. It doesn't pay to prophesy, however, for we may smash them all up ourselves. Q. and I have both driven Spads already, so we don't feel especially worried about it. The Spad is a sweet

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machine, and if you have been reading the *Saturday Evening Post* you will see that only "Supermen" and "Wizards of the Air" can ever hope to master them. The inference is obvious. Perhaps, however, the writer of that article was a bit over-enthusiastic or was being a bit sensational. Now that my testing career is over, I will confess that a weight is off my mind. The idea of being smashed up way behind the lines never appealed to me. The trouble is that my bosses attributed to skill what I know was attributable only to pure luck, for I certainly traveled with a horse-shoe around my neck.

We are billeted in a tiny hamlet, and have for quarters the attic of a tiny farmhouse. Conditions are pretty crude compared to what we are used to, but *ça ne fait rien*. The first evening we were here we went out in the little 'place' to play ball. We hadn't been there two minutes before a flock of kids and old men came out to look at those strange beings called *Americans* who were behaving like infants that way. This seems to be one of the few places in France where *Americans* are still a curiosity.

I guess you can appreciate the advantages of going into French *escadrilles*. We shall be with

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old hands at the game who can teach us much in the gentle art of aerial battle tactics. At the same time I think our enthusiasm will be good for them. . . . Just at this moment we heard a loud beating on a drum outside, and all ran to the window to see what was up. It turned out to be the "town crier" making an announcement. We couldn't hear very well so we all yelled "*Bis, bis*" in loud tones. He then came over to our house and told us that we could care for refugee children at 60 francs a month, etc. France certainly is a delightful, quaint, picturesque, old country and I love it. Do you know those fine old windmills, four-bladed affairs mounted upon a turntable house where they grind wheat? Well, there are many of them around as prominent landmarks on the flat country. Let's call off the old war for a while. You will come over and we shall have a grand old party cruising all over this country and then home for good and all!

H.

Paris, June 15th

DEAR LU,

I feel like a travelling salesman going from place to place with all kinds of disreputable look-

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ing baggage. My poor mail seems always to be one place behind me, but if I ever stay long enough in one place it will eventually catch up. I have just been detached from French Aviation and tomorrow we go to the front, to an American Squadron, so if you don't hear from me for a while don't think I'm a slob. We expect lots of action — and it's the one thing we most want. Golly, it's going to be exciting. I shouldn't be surprised if we did a good deal of "trench strafing" close to the ground; I think that appeals more than the very high work. It's too darn cold up there. Thank goodness, they have left us together, Q. and me. They've been mighty decent about that.

Best love, Lu and Dickie,

HAM.

[Toul], June 19, 1918

BELOVED MOTHER,

Here I am at last after all these months of impatient waiting, and indications point to a busy time. We are very comfortably installed here and the spirit and atmosphere are inspiring to say the least. A pilot at the front is no longer treated as a schoolboy. In my own case I have

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little to complain of in this respect, but I had it much better than did the students at the 3d A. I. C.

The day after arriving our captain sent me up for a trial flight and to get used to the new machine a little. That evening — it was last evening, come to think of it — I went out over the lines with three of the older pilots. It was most bewildering, because there was so hopelessly much to think about. The "Archies" or anti-air craft guns kept a steady fire at us, but meantime it was necessary to regard the instruments on your machine, to keep in touch with your comrades, and continually to watch for the Boches. We sighted a Boche patrol way below us, but they turned back when they saw us. We were only over the lines a few minutes and saw very little in the evening haze.

The real fun started at 3 o'clock, this morning, when a tremendous bombardment started up. It waked me up at once. Shortly afterwards our flight leader tapped on my door and said, "I guess we had better get up, it looks as if the Huns were starting something." When we came over the lines, we could see hundreds of brilliant little flashes twinkling out of the twilight here and

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there. Our job was to remain an hour and a half over a certain place, and jump on any Hun planes who might come out to regulate the fire of their artillery. Well, Mammy, there was a layer of clouds that just suited the Boche anti-air craft gunners. For an hour and a half we circled round over the place amid an incessant storm of shrapnel bursts. Sometimes, they came so close that I could feel my whole plane give a great bounce from the concussion, tho' no fragments actually hit me. We circled, twisted, squirmed and dived and always the black bursts appeared at the spot where we had been only a fraction of a second before. It was absolutely thrilling. As the sun rose we could see more and more of the trenches, and bursts of smoke from exploding shells. The joke is that the Boche started using gas shells exclusively. Then the wind shifted completely around and blew his gas right back on him. There was no infantry action for some reason, merely a violent bombardment, and never a single Boche plane appeared. It was a surprisingly sudden baptism for me, but the sooner one gets used to the Archies and to being continually alert, the better it is, and I was mighty glad they were willing to send me out so soon

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(some of the pilots ahead of me have been waiting around for days).

Q. is in the same group and on the same field, but in a different squadron, darn it all! We are trying to work out some way of having him transferred to this squadron, because both of us know more of the boys in it than in the others.

My official address is — 94th Aero Squadron
1st Pursuit Group, Z. of A.

American E. F.

Your

HAM.

[Toul] June 23, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

My head is heavy as I write these lines. We got up this morning again at 3:30 to stage a little "stunt." My rôle was to go out with our Capt. and patrol a certain length of the lines, drawing anti-craft fire and generally carrying on in such a way as to divert attention from certain of our comrades, who were the chief perpetrators of the stunt. I performed my duty exceptionally well, as I afterwards found out, though I must make the admission that it was entirely unknowingly that I did so. You see I never have been over

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that part of the lines before, so I did not realize when we reached them. Moreover I didn't see any of the black shrapnel puffs, that generally inform one that he is over hostile territory. A few "onion," or incendiary, rockets, and incendiary bullets came up, but still it did not dawn on me. The Capt. seemed to be acting queerly, too, and a few minutes later I lost sight of him. I circled around hoping he would pick me up again, and in the meantime I saw a distant plane that might have been anything. But no, it was one of five Boche machines that had their eye on us and were looking for a chance to bite if we crossed their lines. They must have known I was lost more or less because the Capt., who saw them all the time, said they all started to get together and come my way. About five minutes later the Capt. found me wandering around and he motioned "home." Back we came *tout de suite*, and then he told me how they were aiming to trap us. Two were on our level, one below, and two way above us! It just shows how little the green fighter sees. Anyway I did distract the Boche's attention for a while!

I have another plane as my first one was wrecked a few days ago. The motor stopped

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suddenly when I was very low and over bad country. A good landing was impossible, and I was very lucky to get out of it with wrecking my machine, but not myself. You see these little buses are very small and fast, and dependent greatly upon the motor. Without it, the wings are so small that you have to descend rapidly and land very fast. Obviously, a smooth field is the only one adapted to that kind of work.

This is a great life, and much different from what I pictured life at the front to be. There is little noise, except for occasional artillery activity. We have wonderful quarters, and delicious food: also hot and cold shower baths. Of course, this is a quiet sector, so one must make allowances. Other places are not nearly so good.

I've got to go up on patrol now. A bunch of us will protect some observation planes.

Best love, dear Mammy,

HAM.

[*Touquin*] June 29

DEAREST MAMMY,

I find myself rather restricted in the news I should like to tell you, on account of the censorship regulations. Naturally one must be par-

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ticularly careful about such things in the zone of advance.

We are now living in a most superb chateau! Never have I seen such splendid grounds and gardens, though of course they are not adequately cared for in these times of war. The gardens have beautiful roses, and many other kinds of flowers, but something which interests us even more is the abundant supply of fresh vegetables which they offer. On the grounds of the chateau is a small lake with loads of fish. There are stone steps leading down to the water's edge, and you almost expect to find a gondola waiting there. Really this place is the sort of thing you read about. It seems hardly real. It certainly is up to us to show some good results in our work to justify such luxurious living conditions.

In the line of our work, I have nothing new to tell you since that experience of which I have already written you. You remember, it was the time when I didn't see four Boches who *did* see us, and when our Capt. saved the situation for me. Two nights later we were raided in magnificent style, and had to take to our *abris*, though most of the time we stood just outside watching the show. We could plainly hear two Boche

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planes overhead. Searchlights swayed to and fro over the sky in their efforts to find them, and the brilliant shrapnel bursts which dotted the sky were quickly followed by the boom, boom, and crash as they came more directly over us. Soon after this we drew into our *abri* and almost immediately afterwards four bombs fell about quarter of a mile off in an open field. They made flashes which we could plainly see through the end of our tunnel-like *abri*. The whole earth shook, and we could feel the concussion of air against our faces. Out we came again, but Mr. Boche returned once more. This time instead of dropping bombs he sailed over, fairly near a searchlight emplacement, and spat down a vindictive little stream of glowing incendiary bullets from his machine gun. Satisfied with this demonstration he sailed away to Hunland, soon followed by a companion, whose destructive efforts we had plainly seen at a neighboring town.

We have some active work ahead of us, and are keen as ever about it. It was published in the paper that Capt. James Norman Hall of this squadron was using a new type of Nieuport plane when he was captured. Did you see his good article in the June *Atlantic Monthly*? Do read

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it. It is so infinitely superior to these awful articles we find in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, etc., which make such painful mis-statements and are so obviously written by a short-story writer and not an experienced pilot.

Your loving HAM.

[Touquin] June 30th, 1918

DEAREST LU,

I'll slip in a line to you before it's time to go out on our next patrol. It will take us some time to feel thoroughly at home in this sector, and I spend my spare time staring at my map. You know P. A. always used to make more or less fun of the fact that he was the only one of the family who ever took the slightest interest in maps. Well, I wish he could see his little son H. these days. My map is unquestionably the best friend I have. It really is impracticable to carry a map in your plane, because the minute you start to look at it some wily Boche is "on your tail" in an instant out of nowhere. Lu, it's painful how many things you have to watch simultaneously in this game. Let me just enumerate some of the more important things to do all at the same time — 1. Keep a continual watch out for Boches.

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2. Continually watch your patrol leader. 3. Look at the ground to see where you are going and where you want to go. 4. Watch out for the steady fire of anti-aircraft shrapnel ("Archies"). 5. Watch your instruments which give you the dope on your motor, your altitude, etc. You can easily see how staggering all this is to the newcomer, and really I still place myself in that class. I have not as yet had any combats. I've had some interesting times over the lines looking for Huns, and dodging Archy, and have seen a few Boches on several occasions. No longer are there any of these trips alone over the lines. A lone man is practically certain to be nailed. On all our voluntary patrols we must go at least six strong in formation. As "chasse" or fighting planes our function is to patrol certain areas between certain times in search of Huns, and to offer protection to Allied reconnaissance, réglage, or photographic planes. We also do "alert" duty, during which time we sit around waiting a telephone call reporting Boche planes over such and such a place, at a certain altitude and going in a certain direction. Then we hustle on up to meet them.

We are living in a chateau with wonderful

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lawns, gardens, pine groves, and a small lake full of fish! Did you ever hear of such luxury? Will write when something exciting has happened. Haven't heard from you for ages.

Yours, — HAM.

[*Touquin*] July 7

DEAR MOTHER,

I got a Boche today — or rather Jim Meissner and I got one together, but as we were too far inside their lines for our observation balloons to see it, we shall probably not receive official credit. Four of us attacked a single biplace Rumpler and we all peppered away without result for several minutes. He was fighting for his life and gave us all a good fight! Suddenly it occurred to me that it would be much more to the point to get under his tail where I should be out of range from his rear gun and at the same time have a chance to soak some shots into him at close range. Just as I did so he started to dive, and at the same time Jim Meissner appeared; the other two of our gang had jammed guns and left the scrap. We both shot at the Boche and a second later great hot, red flames burst out from beneath his fuselage. I shall never forget the sensation of seeing a

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stream of flaming tracer bullets from my guns sink into its body and almost instantly flames bursting out as we dove at great speed through the air. At 2000 meters both my guns had jammed, so I left the battle pursued by a group of Fokker monoplane fighters who had come up in the meantime. Jim dove after the Boche a little further, gave him a final salvo of shots and followed me. He scared off a Boche whom he said was hot on my tail. I had lost Jim, my only thought was home for dear life before the mob nailed me. We out-distanced them and Jim pulled up beside me just as we crossed the lines. Golly, I was glad to see him as I didn't know what had become of him. We did not stay to see our victim crash, but from his predicament at 2000 meters from the earth we do not doubt that there are two less Germans in the Imperial Air Service tonight.

H.

[*Touquin*] July 10

DEAR MAMMY,

Quentin and I were not assigned to the same squadron. We are in the same group, consequently operate from the same base and see each other frequently. Let me tell you of the splendid

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coup de main he sprang today: While on patrol with some eight or nine of his comrades over the lines, the formation became broken up in some quick manœuvering. Q. suddenly found himself alone. After circling around a few minutes he saw three planes in formation not far away and hastened to rejoin them, falling into place behind them. It seemed a little queer that his leader should be going so far within the enemy lines, but he thought no more about it until the leader made a sudden turn exposing to full view upon his rudder — a large black cross! "Wrong again," said Q. to himself, but his brain kept right on working. Sneaking close up behind the rear man who either did not see him or supposed him to be one of his friends, Q. took careful aim and let him have a stream of bullets from his machine gun. The plane wavered a second, then toppled over and fell spinning in a spiral like a winged stone. Q. reversed and headed for home at full speed pursued by two bewildered Huns whom he gradually left further and further behind as his little Nieuport roared along. A quick backward glance revealed his victim still spinning after a fall of some nine or ten thousand feet; he then disappeared in a cloud bank.

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Isn't that one of the most remarkable *true* tales you ever heard? It's doubtful if his Boche is confirmed — too far inside their lines. In my experience here I cannot recall a *single* instance when the Boche would come out and fight in our territory or even over the lines. Invariably we must go to them. They are always to be found, often in large numbers, but they seem to have the homing instinct to a high degree. If our Boche of the other day is confirmed, there are three of us who will receive official credit. In a mix-up like that it is often impossible to tell who delivered the telling shot, and often the men who did but little shooting were the biggest factors in the combat by forcing a situation or so distracting the enemy's attention that some one else had a chance to sneak in at close range and put in some telling shots. I know my bullets hit him and that he burst into flames as they entered his fuselage, but I haven't an idea that mine were the only ones that hit him, and I'm sure that another boy's shots fired after I was through (with both guns jammed) was what finished anything there may have been left to finish. It was really a very funny affair at first. Four of us were peppering away indiscriminately, ineffect-

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ively, while he banked his old ship up first on one side, then the other in order to give his observer a chance to shoot first at one of us, then at another. The end of the scrap would have been sad had we been fighting with human beings, but I frankly confess that a thrill of pleasure came over me as I saw the flames burst out.

The tactics of air fighting are fairly complicated and we frequently have to admire the old Boche for his keen knowledge of them. They say the Yanks are quick to learn, however. It really looks as if the Huns had to be very careful about losing men and planes. They do only what is absolutely necessary, crossing the lines only when a definite mission is to be performed. This policy would be good if they were very insistent that allied planes should not cross their lines, but they seem somewhat indifferent about it.

Love,

HAM.

[*Touquin*] Sunday, July 14

DEAR P. A.,

Today is the great French national holiday. We are making a brave show of all the French

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and American flags we can scrape up. It's the least we can do after the fine way they honored our Fourth of July. As it happens, too, our squadron is off duty, because our splendid new planes which arrived yesterday are being all fitted up with guns and equipment, so until they are ready we do nothing, having rid ourselves of our old planes yesterday. Our new ships are the famous Spads, single seater chasse planes of two hundred and thirty horsepower, and very well constructed. Our last planes were very fast and handy, but now that they are gone I will confess to you that they were *not* reliable planes. Every time we went far over the lines we had qualms because the motors frequently gave out and you never could tell when it might happen.

A few days ago occurred the most important event since our arrival on this sector. Some mail from home arrived!

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In a little over a week now I shall be putting on my second service stripe — one year of foreign service. It's hard to realize that I've been away a whole year unless I judge the time by my longing to see my family. When will these vain fools

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come to their senses? Not till they've had some harder knocks than any they've yet received I'm thinking.

Love to all,
HAM.

July 18th, 1918

DEAR LU AND DICKIE,

This is the first chance I've had to write since your letter came about a week ago. I've been cheated out of a lot of action at a most interesting time, because when our brand-new planes arrived, mine turned out to be a lemon. After days of struggling with it I had to have a new one, which takes a few days to equip and get into shape. They are splendid machines — 230-h.p. Spads (monoplane) — and no experiment.

This is the queerest life you ever saw. One week we live in a château, the next we are billeted in dingy farmhouses. Sometimes we eat like kings, again we almost starve because of all being broke! You understand there's plenty of food to be had, but occasionally our pay gets waylaid and out of our last pay we may have bought uniforms, etc. Then we are all broke for a while

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until two months' revenue suddenly comes, when we are tremendously rich! In general, though, I manage to keep ahead of the game. This letter is hopeless; I can't seem to collect my thoughts, so will try again soon.

Affectionately,
HAM.

[*Saints*] Sunday, July 21

MOTHER DEAR,

I was just sitting outside basking in the sun, when three little girls came running by, playing tag. They were all dressed in their very best, and I, putting two and two together in my cleverest manner, decided, "Ah, this must be Sunday!" It's the only way of telling around here. This morning's patrol failed to materialize because of the bad weather, which, however, was not quite bad enough so that we could lie in bed and sleep. No, we had to get out to the field and wait in case it did clear up. We shall try again this evening.

You never knew such an interesting sector with such interesting things to see and others to do. But I cannot give much in the way of detail. From the air it is often very difficult to distinguish

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where the lines are or tell just what is going on. What you do see are thousands of shell-holes, the frequent flashing of guns, and a great quantity of smoke; sometimes large heavy columns of it, more often hundreds of little streaks of smoke.

Last night, we flew at a very low altitude, quite peacefully for a while, until suddenly, woof! a fierce shock rocked my little ship, and in a few seconds there were many of those disturbing black puffs all around and among us. We all began to squirm and twist and that throws off their aim, but golly, how a close shot makes one jump when it arrives unexpectedly! A group of six Huns appeared, obviously trying to pick a scrap — because why? We were in their territory and half a gale of wind was endeavoring to push us further in. They knew that all they had to do was to keep us bothered for a short while after which our gasoline supply would be insufficient to carry us home against that heavy wind. Even if they did not shoot a single one of us down, we should be forced to land in their territory and become prisoners. But we saw the situation as clearly as did they (for a wonder) and refused to delay a single minute. You can see that it is important to grasp the situation quickly and not to fight

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when conditions are strong against you, even though there appears to be a tantalizing prey. I'm afraid that that is how poor Quentin was lost. You knew about his loss surely? I think he forgot about the strong wind against him when he saw the Boches. Undoubtedly he fought splendidly, but when it was over, he had drifted still further into Bocheland and had insufficient fuel to come out. Probably also they kept bothering him every foot of his way.

Really it is almost laughable the way you move and countermove, retreat or advance, in preparing a big combat or "dog-fight." These do not often happen because circumstances usually make it foolhardy for one or the other patrol to fight. The ordinary case is where a whole patrol picks on a few planes over which it has an advantage of position etc. Then frequently another formation comes to the rescue and you have an unpremeditated "dog-fight."

You know I often think of old Cousin Sam Langley, a man with the courage of his convictions all right. I've always admired him immensely. And now I'm happy because my fondest dreams have come true. War provides

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such a good justification for flying! Surely he too has "heard the heavens filled with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew from the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue."

Your

HAM.

[*Saints*] July 29, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

During the past week we did not "prove" much in the air — our squadron, I mean. Bad weather frequently robbed us of patrols, and when we did go out we seldom saw Boches. Once, however, we saw more than we cared about. Nine of us on patrol saw a formation of six Boches planes below and our leader signalled to attack. Just as we started down, however, *eighteen* more Boches appeared over the edge of the clouds. We saw at once that we were in a bad fix. We swung round as quickly as possible, but they were by this time close "on our tails" and the "tracers" began to fly past us. I don't mind saying I was thoroughly scared — twenty-four against nine is poor odds especially when one is over enemy territory. Looking back I could plainly distinguish every feature of the enemy planes nearest me.

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They were single seats Fokker biplanes. We became somewhat scattered in our hasty retreat, so I can speak only for myself. I kept my motor open wide and kicked my rudder to and fro which gave my machine a zig-zag motion and made it a difficult target. As luck would have it my plane didn't suffer any bullet holes. Fortunately our Spads are very fast: surely that was all that saved us.

Mammy, you have no idea how exciting the times are. Of course you know from the papers exactly what has been happening about this time, but I have had the good luck to go up to the front one rainy day last week and see some of the most interesting sights. I saw several of the steel boats in which the Boches crossed the Marne. Everywhere was débris and plunder of every kind. On the way home we passed an ambulance train and someone yelled "Hi, Ham Coolidge!" Looking back I recognized Phil Shepley in a black leather coat waving his arms. Our captain was in a hurry so we couldn't stop.

Yesterday the motor of my beloved Spad went to pieces, luckily over a French aerodrome near the lines. Meanwhile I use the plane of a comrade *en permission*.

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A letter of greeting arrived from Uncle Arch. Would that I might have seen him. Mother, Doug. Campbell is now on his way home. If he comes to Boston give him a *time*; he's one of the finest boys in the world, besides being a great friend of mine, and an "ace" with seven official Boches!

Your loving,
HAM.

P. S.

Many thanks for congratulatory cable!

[Saints] August 3

DEAR P. A.,

I hasten to correct an account of my adventures which gives me considerable pain! The *Herald* obviously had my name confused with that of an observer in one of the biplace observation groups. I do not drive a *big* French biplane, but a small one. It is not equipped with four guns. I did not turn upon seven attackers and send one down in flames . . . only a biplace Salmson observation machine fulfills the described conditions. The *Globe* account is correct. It is true that I have official credit for downing a biplace Rumpier. It is nothing but pure luck that my bullets hap-

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pened to be the ones to bring out the flames, for certainly the other two boys deserve exactly as much credit for downing it as I do. Also it is the sort of thing that happens every day and they shouldn't have stuck in my picture and written all that junk. It's a pity.

Lately we have had some close calls in the air. Once at least it was due to bad judgment on our part . . . the other time a patrol of Fokker biplanes came "down the sun" on us . . . we were very lucky to get away alive. Those canny Boches play their cards well, and I think we have learned much from them. We are always ready to accept a battle when conditions are equally favorable to both sides. They won't as a rule.

Aug. 4, 1918

DEAR MOTHER,

You speak about Joe's doping the end of this mess . . . well, developments do seem to indicate that Germany's offensive power is about over, and without offensive ability has Germany got any hold on her people? I am hoping to go up to Chamery where Quentin is reported to have been buried.

Last Monday we got mixed up in another hor-

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rid "dog-fight" with a large flock of those little Fokker monoplace biplanes. We were practically engaged in the combat before we realized that there were two of them to every one of us. They seemed to come from nowhere. Two of our boys had hair-breadth escapes, but the rest of us managed to clear out without getting "shot up." Of course the one morning my machine was out of commission proved to be the only time in the week that our patrol had an advantage of position on a Boche patrol. Our boys claim two of them.

They gave me official credit for the biplace Rumpler three of us brought down together, but why make a fuss about it? People are doing it every day, so if they would only report the facts without the trimmings it would be all right. More and more one sees that the whole thing is mostly luck. Some of our best pilots have never had the luck to be in a position where they could have shot a Boche down.

We had a little fun working low over the infantry last week, and I think it is immensely satisfactory work even if a little risky. At times, we dove down on our sides close enough to see the expressions on the faces of our soldiers.

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They were apparently full of enthusiasm, and frequently on automobile trips to the front they have told us that it has a very good moral effect on our troops to see their own planes overhead, very close. We did not actually shoot up the Boche infantry as I should like to have done, as we were on purely protective missions, and few in number, but I hope they give us some offensive work. You ought to see the effect of the Allied advance on everyone's spirits, it would do your heart good.

Today we had lunch with an American aviator in the French flying corps, who recently escaped from Germany after ten months' imprisonment on his third attempt! You could have heard a crumb fall on the floor as we sat listening to him talk, reticently enough, about his escape. Working on the roads one noon, he made a break for the woods under a volley of bullets from the sentries. He stayed in the Black Forest traveling only at night, and gradually made his way to the Swiss border, suffering hideously from hunger and thirst. He ate raw potatoes only. The last kilometer was the whole thing because of the triple sentry line. He succeeded in slipping by the first one, then killed the next two with a

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knife, whereupon a hail of bullets came flying all around. The night was inky black, however, so they were all wild. And he walked to a Swiss village, weak from starvation and minus his trousers which he had lost in swimming a river before reaching the border.

Good night, Mammy,
Your HAM.

Aug. 5th, 1918

DEAREST LU,

I fear you have given me up for a bad job — at least I should fear it, were it not that your dear letters continue to arrive regularly. Thank goodness you're that kind of a feller.

We are just beginning to fatten up into normal looking humans again. You see some fool paymaster went and lost our pay checks for two months and the whole crowd soon became penniless — pardon me, centimeless is more correct. The result was that our mess became poorer and poorer as our credit at the local butcher shops waned, till finally the food was such that we could hardly eat it. Now, however, one of the two missing month's pay has arrived and we are all getting fat again.

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Jove how those guns are pounding away! I'm sitting here on the floor of our rotten little farmhouse room, and writing on my trunk at the window. The ceiling hangs very low and we aren't flying; perhaps the low ceiling accounts for the way the sound carries. The front has been running away so fast we can hardly find it!

Each evening they post up on a door (bulletin board) the "service" for the following day. It might read like this: "High Patrol, 17.30 — 19.15 o'clock, all available pilots." An hour or so beforehand we all get together to dope out what formations we will fly in, what flight leaders we will follow, and what the tactics will be. Frequently we fly not all together in one mass, but in two or perhaps even three separate groups working together. This is very good dope if you have enough men. One evening I remember we "jumped" a patrol of six Boches below us only to have eighteen more sail down on us from above a ledge of cloud, and we had a hot time pulling out of it. They almost always work that way. Time and again we have been in the act of attacking a tempting morsel when intuition prompted us to look back of us and far above—*la, la!*—two patrols of seven, or perhaps one there

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and another way off to one side. It's almost like a game of checkers at times. Every movement of one unit produces a certain move from the other units that may be in the sky at the time — this manœuvring coming to a climax when a general combat develops or one or the other gang clears out in a hurry. Curiously enough a "dog-fight," or general engagement, almost always splits even as far as losses are concerned. We do not have many of them. Often our job is to act as a protecting escort to photography or reconnaissance planes. Then we often get into scraps.

P. A. just sent me some clippings from Boston papers in which they have some painful junk about me and worst of all a big picture. L., I hope you'll do your best to squelch all that 'rah, 'rah stuff, because they always get things twisted or exaggerate disgustingly. It is true that I and two other boys shot down a biplace Rumpler in flames, but under perfectly ordinary circumstances, under which the most romantic mind could never paint us as "heroes." We had a fairly exciting scrap for five minutes or so as they held us off with their rear guns. Once we closed in, it was all over but the cheering, except that a bunch of Fokkers dropped down and chased us

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back home. It does give you a thrill to see one of those heathens burst into flames under your fire! You know, Lu, you can actually see your bullets because one in every five is a "tracer" which leaves a streak of smoke, and naturally these come in rapid succession. In a hot combat these smoky streaks can be seen for a long distance, going in every direction.

The village where Q. is reported to have been buried is now in Allied hands, so I am going to try and get up there in an auto the first chance. You never saw such a mess as the whole country is in up there.

Affectionately, HAM.

[*Saints*] August 11, 1918

DEAR NONIE,

. . . I have been terribly busy in my letter-writing time because of having to take care of both Bill Chalmers' and Quentin Roosevelt's affairs . . . making inventories and writing letters, and attending to all their mail, etc. Then we have had a little flying thrown in on the side! Just at present I'm a hard luck kiddo. My first Spad was no good. My second one went beautifully for a while till one day a valve broke and

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tore my motor to pieces. They put in a new motor and we spent days getting it to run right. Yesterday we finally thought we had it *au point* so I started cheerfully out for the lines. A few minutes later I felt a drizzle of water in my face and suspected it was raining but no, the water was hot. Then a pipe burst and the cockpit was flooded with boiling water from the cooling system. Luckily I was able to land at a French field where they fixed up the pipe and I gaily started out a second time. Again a drizzle of water, this time from a different place, a plug had come out of the water jacket and let it all out again. My temperature began to rise and before I finally made a good landing field the poor old motor was almost *grillé*. A wooden plug in the hole held the water sufficiently for me to limp back home the most disgusted man you ever saw.

This morning I flew up to a little field near the lines where I took to a motorcycle to look for Quentin's grave. Well, what do you know . . . in passing through a small village all shot to pieces, I suddenly saw Rose Peabody walking down the street! You can imagine the surprise of meeting her. Gosh it was swell! It turned out that her mobile hospital was located there.

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Then on to look for poor Q.'s grave which had been reported but never officially confirmed, to be at Chamery. I can say that, as it was published in all the papers. After scouting around for a while we finally found it near the town. The Americans had fixed up his grave decently. It had a plain wooden cross, but there was a little fence around the grave and some wild flowers upon it. Nearby were a few charred remains of his machine where it fell, and a hole some three feet deep which it had dug into the ground where it had crashed. Nonie, that's what makes an impression on one in this war. Bursting shrapnel, onion rockets, machine gun bullets and Boche planes give you a start at first, but you get used to all that. What you can never get used to, though, is to have your very best friends "go West."

From there we could hear all around us the pound, pound of big guns, and of a sudden a sort of shallower whang, whang, as the black Boche anti-aircraft shrapnel clustered around a group of our planes in the distance. All you can actually see of the lines from a place like that is the sausage balloons here and there along the lines. . . . And the question on the lips of all

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the "dough-boys" is "What do you think of the Liberty planes?"

Day before yesterday I went to Paris for a few hours of pleasure. I saw Quentin's sister-in-law and his brothers, Archie and Ted, both wounded as I suppose you heard. Arch is leaving shortly for home, and he says that he will go to see Mother which would be great. Also you knew that Douglas Campbell, the first American trained "Ace" is on the water. We are very good friends and he, too, promised to drop in at 10 West Hill Place if he could work it. . . .

HAM.

[Coincy] Sunday, Aug. 17, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

The nice gray letters keep reaching me even on days when there is no mail for the rest of the squadron! They all howl with rage when that happens. Our little operations office is a tent out at the flying field. It serves not only as a shelter for the stenographer and clerks who do the paper work, but also as a general loafing-place for lazy pilots, and it is there between patrols or while awaiting special calls that our letters come. . . .

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Our work has been continuing but not too satisfactorily. Last Wednesday I think it was, we were coming out of Germany and saw a formation coming towards us out of France. We took it for granted for some reason that they were Spads — and likewise they apparently concluded that we were friendly Fokkers! Only when we were abreast of each other did we each suddenly realize that we were enemies. We swung around like a flash and pointed our planes down in a mad dive after the fleeing Fokkers, shooting angry streams of smoking tracers after them, but they had the start and we could not get close enough to do any damage. It was exasperating because it was a rare chance. Yesterday a very sad thing happened. As our formation was flying towards the lines they spotted a group of Huns “in the sun” above, and started to dive down away from them. As our boys dove they were naturally looking back over their shoulders watching the enemy, when suddenly two of our very best pilots collided. The wings were stripped cleanly from one machine which fell like a stone. The other had the wings on one side badly damaged. He was seen to go down in a slow spiral under more or less control. Everybody hoped that he

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might have landed safely, but later investigation proved that they were both smashed to pulp. It's such a hideous way to lose men. . . .

Yesterday, however, there was one bright spot in a rather gloomy week. I walked over from our auxiliary field to the nearby hospital and found Rose Peabody. I spoke of meeting her just for a second once before, but this time I stayed for lunch, and a good old chat. It was delightful seeing such a nice person again. She looks bright and very cheerful, but also very thin I thought. She admitted that they have had some pretty hectic experiences with: — shells, gas, a flood, bombs, and quantities of patients! No wonder she looked thin.

Mammy, why didn't you tell them to build some Liberty *cbasse* planes? All these beautiful new Liberty biplace machines don't help us poor combat pilots any. We ride only single seater (monoplace) machines.

Monday. I have just come back from an auto trip close up to the lines to visit the graves of those poor boys who collided. The shells were bursting close at times. A few hundred yards away they were shelling a battery furiously.

Good-night dearest Mother,

YOUR H.

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Deauville, August 25, 1918

Sunday again, dear Mother, and I'm sitting gazing out upon a calm blue sea, with a cloudless blue sky overhead, and a hot sun beating down upon a long sandy beach dotted with gay colored sunshades and clamoring bathers. Oh, where am I? Why, just nearing the Archie puffs that denote the lines? — No, wrong, I'm at *Deauville* in the Normandy hotel on a 3 day permission. It's perfectly heavenly here, a complete change from that awful hole. I only wish my "air eyes" could penetrate 3 thousand miles across that ocean instead of a paltry 5 or 6 miles. I would so love to see you sitting down to Sunday dinner at Squam and hear the multifarious voices that have always accompanied such an occasion. You know your letters have made me almost live at Squam for the last few weeks. Often in these calm hot evenings I've wandered out into a newly shorn wheat-field, propped myself against one of the neatly bundled shocks of wheat and gazed at the moon! The friendly shocks at precise intervals around have been my companions, and they are so sympathetic. They appreciate what Squam means and who are the dear people there. They realize that we live in a very dreary, mon-

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otonous place and that our food is so infested with filthy flies that our tummies have gone sadly back on us. They know why all our regular operations have been suspended, and why we have been doing mock battle manœuvres to while away the time (no one else does, though). They are omniscient; they could even tell me why our motors are continually breaking down and causing trouble and keeping willing pilots from accompanying their companions on patrols over the lines. It's so good to have somebody who realizes all those things.

This is the gayest, noisiest, prettiest place I've seen for a long time. Chester Snow and I are going in for a good swim this afternoon, afterwards going to "Charley's bar" where we pick up Sigourney Thayer and Harry Cabot for dinner. After that we shall probably go to the *opera* at the casino, or to a concert in one of the music halls.

Not a single noisy motor troubles the sky, not a solitary gun shakes the earth, and comparatively few American soldiers obstruct the landscape! All the latest Paris fashions may be seen for the trouble of taking a stroll upon the promenade or the beach.

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I should awfully have liked to see the Normants again, but I simply *had* to have a complete change of scene and I needs must see the old ocean once more after months and months of flat, and often devastated plains.

Bless you,
HAM.

Sept. 4, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

Your letters come in precious profusion — but often with the dates all twisted. Just a few days ago I got letters of about the last of June — since getting several dating well into August. . . .

If we have been for some weeks living a very dull life of almost complete and discouraging idleness, we are now very much in the war again. That is all I can tell you now, but you will surely know more soon. Last evening it was very calm and clear and we were sent “over” to try and bring down a certain enemy observation balloon. All was going beautifully — but when we approached the place we saw that it wasn’t up — much to our disgust. Shooting down balloons is pretty risky work — a good deal more so than combat with enemy planes. You see they send

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up a fierce barrage of machine gun fire, Archies, flaming "onion" rockets, etc., in a circle around the old sausage. Today we patrolled nearly two hours, lying in wait for some of the photographic planes that come over quite often, and which we expected today — nothing turned up. That condition won't last long, as other patrols have encountered all kinds of Boche aircraft. Supper time — nice camp-like food in a tent — and not so many flies on account of the cooler weather.

Your loving,

H.

[No date]

DEAREST MOTHER,

By good luck I am able to slip in a between-times letter to you to tell you that all goes well. I never felt better in my life, am a little thinner perhaps, but still as keen as ever about the work.

They speak of making me a squadron commander when I have a little more experience — I dread the day — because a squadron commander has so much paper work, etc., that he can hardly ever fly. Many of them are glad, but I want to keep flying above all else and do not care for advancement except for your sake.

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Our machines are very fast, solid, and fairly dependable, far different from those awful fire-traps we were using before and on one of which Q. was shot down.

The Liberty looks *good* and I predict that very soon it will have become a counting factor in Allied aviation.

Sunday, Sept. 8, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

Our afternoon patrol has just been called off on account of rain, so I retire to our little barrack to write in comfort. The barrack is only temporary as we are to move into tents tomorrow. The tents don't particularly appeal at this time of year, but they have the one great advantage of being in a little pine wood and pine woods always smack of Squam and home. Anyway, it is a thousand per cent better than being billeted,—to my way of thinking.

We are fairly close to the lines and it's great to be able to get there in a few minutes. We can see the sights and hear the sounds—day and night—that make you feel really in the war. In fact, one of our chief amusements in the evening is to stand outside looking off towards the lines where intermittent flashes light the sky for

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a brief second and low thunder follows soon after. Occasionally a searchlight beam roams the sky like a lost pilot looking for home. Then at clock-like intervals from Bocheland a string of fiery balls sails slowly upwards and fades out. These are variously interpreted, but they surely are signals of some kind. Less frequently than these signal lights parachute flares go up, burst out in a brilliant flood of light, and sink slowly down to earth.

But that isn't flying, is it? On the whole flying is what preoccupies us most. Each night about nine o'clock the schedule for the next day comes in. From one corner of the dark barrack comes a cheer from the second flight who learn that their first patrol is not until 11 A.M. — while a dismal groan from the other side reveals the fact the first and third flights go on at daybreak! Inwardly, though, they are glad because that's a good time of day to fly. The early bird is pretty apt to catch the worm.

Well, yesterday I had a little excitement. My flight was on patrol but it was my turn to stay behind alone and patrol this side of the lines for enemy photography planes who take advantage of every opportunity to sneak over and snap some

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pictures. For an hour and a quarter I had been up very high (5700 meters) and was about to come home when some white Archie puffs below caught my attention. I stared hard, and there sure enough were two biplane machines headed towards — in our lines. I doped out my plan of attack and moved over between them and the lines — still far above them. Once directly behind them, I throttled down slightly and took a headlong dive of nearly a mile. The wires and struts of my plane simply screeched from the wind pressure but I wanted to get behind and below as quickly as possible so as not to be seen. About halfway down, however, the back man saw me coming and he swung off instantly into his lines. That shot spoiled, I kept on going for the front man who evidently had not yet seen me. My attack had been calculated for the back man so it naturally was not right for the front one who saw me before I could reach his "blind spot." He swung towards home in a big circle under full power with me trailing along behind trying desperately to get under his tail. Mine was a borrowed plane and the old motor suddenly began to splutter. I was mad as a hatter, but chased on, getting slightly closer. He decided it

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was too close so he banked over his machine and the gunner opened up on me. I swung behind his elusive tail and blazed away at him. The old tracers flew back and forth that way for some minutes but my misbehaving motor would not pull hard enough to give me a close range shot. Then it suddenly occurred to me that I was several kilometers in Boche land and alone — with a failing motor! Obviously I could not make home but I knew of another field nearer to that place. My Boche had evidently decided it was dinner time for I last saw him gliding down towards his aerodrome; I, too, had an empty feeling in my tummy which a sudden burst of Archie shots only accentuated. The old motor got worse and worse as I sunk down and down — but now I was safely across the lines and well on the way to the aerodrome which I barely made with the dying gasp from an almost red-hot motor. The C. O. brought me home after lunch in his smooth running Cadillac. Another reminder of happy days!

It was a fierce disappointment not to have nailed one of those Rumplers. Perhaps my own plane (temporarily out for repairs) would have given me the chance — but then, it's all luck.

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France, Sept. 14th, 1918

DEAR ROGER,

This is about the first time I've had a chance to answer all those swell letters you wrote me from Squam trying to make me jealous! Well, I have to admit you succeeded pretty well, you monkey. No, when I cussed you out for not writing, those letters were not lost at all. A big bunch of them were delayed somewhere, probably on account of moving around (which we naturally have to do a good deal), so when I arrived here I found a whole fistful of your letters waiting. Pretty nice!

Jove, it must have been wonderful going up old Passy, Whiteface, etc., again. I can remember when we boobs, knowing nothing about camping at first, made our initial trips up those mountains, and what scrapes we ran into — we couldn't light fires, couldn't cook stuff well when we did get them lit, and ran out of grub long before we expected to. We had a heluva time at first — but loved it just the same.

Dear old Mister — I wish I could take you with me on one of our trips "over" these days. I guarantee it would be the most interesting hour and forty-five minutes you ever spent. At least it hits me that way. The other day we patrolled

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not three miles high as we often do, but just above the tops of the trees! We could see everything that went on below, only it was a little like trying to distinguish objects by the roadside when you go by in an auto at 130 miles an hour. A brief glimpse of something and you are past — then something else, and so on. In one place we saw an American battery of 75's right out in the open field banging away to beat the band. The American uniforms, however, are *very* hard to see against the ground. You don't see many men actually. What you do see are flashes of flame, puffs of smoke and great geysers of mud and rocks where shells hit and explode. Then we passed over Boche-land. We weren't sure it was Boche-land till we suddenly heard ra, ta, ta — ra, ta, ta, ta, ta! Then there was no question about it. They were shooting at us from the woods, but darn it, we couldn't see those machine gun nests. You'd be surprised what good acrobacy you can do when machine gun bullets and shrapnel begin to fly about you! The fellow behind me got seven bullets in his plane and said he saw a shrapnel burst right on top of me. I didn't realize it came that close, but later I found a few places where splinters had torn the linen. The other fellow

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was not hurt. When we come home we write a detailed report of every single thing we noticed on the ground, stating just where and when and how, etc. . . .

One rather nice stunt was inaugurated a few days ago. They issue us packages of cigarettes all bundled up in padded cloth with a note attached. We fly right down over our attacking troops and chuck them overboard. The infantry boys get the cigarettes and read the note which makes them feel fine. It says that they are advancing wonderfully — that the air service is right with them, and to keep going like Hell or something after that order. Anyway, it helps keep up their spirits.

Get husky and wise at Groton this year, old boy — and remember that even if your old brother isn't there to cuss you out all the time, he's thinking of you often.

Love,
HAM.

[Rembercourt] September 15th, 1918

DEAR MOTHER,

To try and describe the events of the past week in any sort of a complete way would be impossible

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and unpermissible. Do look back at your newspaper clippings of about this date and you will know the general history of events. Perhaps I can add some details to help out a little, though it is only from the point of view of a pilot who can see but little of all that takes place. It's a little like trying to recall all that one sees from an express train window after the journey is over, only we have the added difficulty of having to pay considerable attention to our little express train itself. We are the engineers as well as the passengers.

Thursday morning we went out in groups of threes or fours, flying at a height of perhaps two hundred feet. Our object was to see everything possible on the ground and to try and establish the location of the lines. I headed a group of four, one on either side a little in back of me, and one a few hundred meters above and behind. Well, you never saw such a sight or heard such sounds. We started down our lines just at their edge and every second came flashes and white puffs from our batteries. We were so close that every explosion rocked us about frantically and often threatened to dash us into the tree tops. In fact sometimes our little ships were almost

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unmanageable. Just below us in the open field was an American battery firing madly at an objective we knew well. We could see very few men actually. The color of our uniforms is very hard to distinguish against the ground, and we were tossing about madly in the writhing air currents. By this time we were quite far in Boche-land. Burning villages, dumps and store-houses stood out sharply. On we went, but now over woods again — Boche or Allied?

I could see horses mounted by officers rushing to and fro on the roads, and trucks, wagons and men moving madly along, but dared not fire on them for fear of their being Americans. You simply couldn't distinguish their uniforms. Then the party began for us. The Archies opened up full blast, hanging hideously close, when suddenly, sharp and distinct through the noise of our motor came the unmistakable ra ta ta ta ta of machine gun bullets. I thought a Boche might be on my tail and began to squirm wildly about, looking back all the time. No one was there except the other three boys who were also squirming. Of course they were shooting at us from those machine gun nests in the woods, but as they used no tracer bullets I could not see where they came

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from. One man (on my left) got seven bullets in his plane and had to leave. It was really pretty hot work patrolling so low — but it was intensely interesting. The air was filled with Allied aircraft of all types and strange to say not a Boche appeared. Since then, however, they have come out in large numbers. One of our four had left already, another had a *panne de moteur*, and just squeaked over the lines. The last two of us then started back against a heavy wind with Archies breaking all around us and occasional ra ta ta ta's from the ground. No sooner had we crossed the lines than my motor groaned and died! Down I went into a little valley and had a nasty time worming my way into a tiny patch of good ground past telegraph wires, barbed wire entanglements, and shell holes. I came to rest not four feet from one of the last named. A Spad is heavy and lands fast at best, so it's no fun to have forced landings. From here I walked to a French divisional headquarters where I found the other boy who had *panned* previously. We tried desperately to communicate with home but the wires were too busy, so by supper time we were still there. At this point the General emerged from his holy of holies, greeted us most cordially

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and invited us to mess with him and his staff — and at the threshold of the mess-hall insisted that we go in first! These Frenchmen certainly beat the world for politeness. At dinner the conversation was entirely military and most interesting. Also, we were able to tell the General several interesting things we had noticed on our patrol that afternoon. The feeling between French and Americans is wonderful. Apparently they can work together in perfect harmony on any kind of a job. In fact I'm not sure that they don't often make a point of mixing them up in military operations.

At ten o'clock we had not succeeded in getting in touch with our squadron, so the adjutant sent us home in the General's limousine! You can imagine what fun it was comparing notes with all the others next morning. It was then that we learned of the beautiful little *coup de main* made by Lieut. K. of one of the other squadrons (there are four of them) in our group. Patrolling low over some woods he saw a convoy of Boches on the road below. He dove down with both guns blazing, and saw horses and men in mad confusion. Several horses dropped, others jumped up against wagons and trucks, stopping the whole convoy.

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He then raced home, told his news and a bombing squadron was immediately sent to the spot where a few well-placed shots effectively stopped the whole outfit, most of which was soon after captured by the advancing infantry.

I've been kicking myself ever since for not realizing that much of what I saw was Boche — but our primary object was visual reconnaissance and it's a hideous thing to fire on one's own troops. You see it isn't like hanging above the show in a balloon. At that low altitude one's field of vision is so restricted that it changes every second. You travel a hundred and thirty miles an hour, rocking and tossing about and squirming around to avoid the deadly shrapnel and sputtering bullets — so it's very hard to see things clearly!

Since Thursday the drive has been going splendidly as you know. Our boys have accounted for several Boches and done some fine protective and defensive work. They have been meeting more and more hostile planes, but — etc.! The words "Liberty plane" are often heard these days. But I can best tell of things that I myself have seen, and yesterday I saw things I shall never forget.

The Captain invited me to go with him in his

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car to X—— where Tom Crocker was *en panne*. Now this place had been in Allied hands for just a day and a half. The plane landed among the hills back of the town which for four long years the Boche had occupied. When we finally got to the plane by walking about a mile from the car, we found it would take an hour or so to fix it. We left the mechanics at work on it and started out to look around. The hills were just riddled with German trenches and battery positions. Every step through the woods revealed dugouts, "pill boxes," trenches and gun emplacements. We had to be terribly careful because the Boche leave every conceivable kind of infernal machines, mines, time bombs, etc., when they get a chance. The day before, eight Frenchmen had been killed by touching a hidden wire or picking up an interesting object to which was attached a wire communicating with a bomb of some kind. The place was just thick with wires on the ground—on trees, in fact everywhere. Of course most of them were telephone wires. In one concrete dugout the walls were three feet thick, a partition separated it into two small rooms in one of which was a switchboard with hundreds of wires. In the next room a stool and

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desk were placed in front of a narrow slit which looked out down a slope and off for many miles into our territory. It was a splendid observation post for artillery *réglage*. In other dugouts were comfortable bunks with stoves. The whole thing impressed one by its solidity and permanence. We dared not go down deep into any of the countless subterranean passages, but even on the surface we found some very interesting things — some of which might help along your precious scrap-book. There was any quantity of ammunition of all kinds, and countless other things.

Remember we only covered a few hundred yards in those miles of unexploited wonders, and it was interesting that we were the first Allies in some of those spots, or at least I think we were (and have good reasons). When Tom's plane had been fixed and he was safely off for home, we started back in the car. Our way lay through X — the town just reoccupied by the French. Two thousand civilians had stayed there all those years of Boche occupancy, and only the day before had the French soldiers come marching in. They told us that when the women saw their soldiers coming they rushed out into the streets and threw their arms around their necks. From every

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window flew French flags. All the civilians dressed in their Sunday best walked around with happiness in their faces, drawn thin and haggard from all they had been through. In the Square *place* were many French soldiers and civilians and a brass band was playing. It pleased me that in spite of the fact that there were no Americans present and they hadn't seen us, they played the "Stars and Stripes Forever" as one of their tunes. Then followed the Marseillaise and we went home with lumps in our throats and little shivers up our spines. The spirit of these people is so wonderful.

It's supper time, dear Mammy.

Your
HAM.

September 25, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

Nothing particularly exciting of late. We have had a run of rainy weather which has kept us on the ground. Even on the ground we are busy. Gun sights to line up at frequent intervals, machine guns to keep limbered up, countless little adjustments on the plane which need one's attention, and pistol practice, etc., if one wants. I

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want to, because I have not got a string of Boches to be proud of or satisfied with, and every little way in which one can train oneself in spare time is pure gain.

I am a "flight leader" now. A squadron contains three flights of six to eight planes and pilots each. These flights usually operate individually, following the daily operation schedule, and sometimes we even split up our flight, working in two groups of three or one of four and one of two at different altitudes. Last week the only time we met Boches at all was when we outnumbered them so that they turned tail. You'd be surprised how hard it is to get Boches. Conditions are so very seldom right for a good combat at equal odds. I go out alone on voluntary patrols whenever I get a chance, but unless one is an "ace" he is not allowed to cross the lines alone. My chance of course is the venturesome photographic who tries to sneak across the lines unnoticed. I told you about attacking two, but not, or probably not, succeeding in shooting either one down. This morning I had a lone photographic all picked out, but my plane simply could not climb up to anywhere near his level. He must have been between six and seven thousand

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meters up! Then I carefully manoeuvred into the sun over another plane which looked Boche-y and a steep dive brought me right upon him in a few seconds all in position to fire, and unseen. But it turned out to be a French Spad of a smaller size than ours. He had not seen me approach, and noticed me only when I was right on his tail. He was so surprised that he did about three turns of *vrille* before collecting his wits enough to recognize my plane!

Your loving
HAM.

Sunday, Sept. 29, 1918

DEAR LU,

Last Wednesday night our program for the next morning was announced. Our squadron would take off at 5.15 A.M. (by flares), proceed to the lines, and, precisely, at 5.45 attack simultaneously the enemy observation balloons in a certain sector. Those down in flames, we might finish out the patrol protecting our own balloons or doing such work as might demand attention. Now, Lu, you'll understand why I tell everything hereafter in the first person. It is because of the darkness at that hour which made concerted

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action impossible. We couldn't even see the planes when we started. Also you are alone in a *chasse* machine even though you generally operate in groups.

At eleven o'clock P.M. the barrage started, — a barrage that few of us will ever forget — surely it was one of the heaviest in the history of the war. You can imagine the effect on one's dreams! We did manage to sleep though, until the orderly woke us all sharp at four. We tucked away a good hot breakfast amid the time honored remarks about "better make a meal of it, because it will probably be our last" and that sort of junk. At 5.05 we were sitting in our Spads, all groomed up for the occasion, with our motors warming up lazily. It was pitch dark save for the row of searchlights which illuminated the take-off. One by one we taxied down to the path of light and took off into the blackness beyond. I had a hideous second just as I left the ground, when I missed a collision by inches. That was soon forgotten in the anticipation of our work. Once above the field I looked around. The mist hung heavily below particularly in the valleys. For just a brief second "Is it worth while to go on; I won't be able to see a thing and besides

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—," then a loud "Hell, let's go!" came from somewhere else within, and off we went for the lines. In spite of the mist there wasn't a shadow of doubt in which general direction to sail. In about five minutes I had reached the barrage and vainly sought Verdun, which was shrouded in mist below. My mind just swam with the enormity of what went on.

As far as I could see to the west and southeast thousands of flashes glared out of the mist below in alternate glows and twinkles. It seemed almost a colossal band of flame about a kilometer wide. I circled round to get my bearings before passing through that magnificent extended eruption of thousands of volcanoes. The river was unmistakable because of the streak of mist, whiter than the rest, which hung close upon it. Then the lines were unmistakable because of the barrage. With this dope well digested, I took a big breath and plunged in. An airplane motor makes a roar, but it was as nothing compared to the boom of the guns immediately below. My little ship rocked and shivered in the blast, and at times I could actually see shells fly by. A faint, sudden streak or thread of pink against the darkness was all I could see but I knew it must

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be a shell passing. I marvelled that in such a rain of flying shells a plane could escape being hit; only one man in all of our aviation did get hit by our own shells that day. Now I knew that our balloon positions must lie beyond where those shells were landing. Below I could see a dark stretch of ground, while ahead the flashes appeared again. No Man's Land was quickly passed and I was over their lines. The flashes were clearer and the air was full of strange manifestations entirely new to me. Several green flaming balls would slowly ascend in one place, while red or blue rockets glowed at another. Then funny whistling masses of flame would glow out. I kept on but could make out almost nothing distinct which would guide me.

The East was just beginning to light up a little and I saw a patch of woods where I knew one of their balloons ought to be. I circled round behind them and came down fairly low to look. Nothing was there in the shape of a sausage balloon. All right, let's look for the next one. But no, not so easy. The Boches had been willing to let me come over their wood, but they didn't want to let me go back. Suddenly a line of green dots whizzed up in front of me. Then an-

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other and still more. They looked like streams of scintillating ghostly fire and waved gracefully back and forth in a semicircle ahead as does the water from a battery of powerful fire hose. Obviously I would have to pass through that impressive pyrotechnic display. They were using all incendiary bullets in their old machine guns. Most of the streams seemed to issue from one spot in the woods, so I thought I would at least show them I had some fireworks on my ship too. I pointed her nose straight at the spot and let drive a stream of incendiaries from my balloon gun. Instantly their old barrage stopped and I lost no time in beating it! Looking back I saw them again but they all went behind me.

After looking all around I simply could not find a single Boche balloon. It was getting lighter now and I could just begin to distinguish towns and roads and forests below. As long as I was over there anyway, I decided to have my money's worth out of the occasion. I could see occasionally dark objects sail by me and sometimes with streams of fire shooting out ahead and down. They were my friends. I dropped down very low to look around, and immediately noticed a long line of dark objects on the road below. It

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was a *supply train*. I thought it must be Boche, but wouldn't it be hideous to shoot up an Allied train? How my old heart just hammered with excitement as I dove down beside that road, not fifty feet high, and recognized those Boche helmets! In a twinkling I was past them, gained a little height to turn in safety, and came diving down upon them from the rear. I just held both triggers down hard while the fiery bullets flew streaming out of the two guns. Little glimpses was all I could catch before I was by. Another turn and down the line again. I had a vague confused picture of streaming fire, of rearing horses, falling men, running men, general mess. Turn again and back upon them. This time I clearly saw two men heel off the seat of a wagon, then more awful mess. A fourth time I turned and came back. One gun stuck but the incendiaries still blazed on. Horses rearing on fallen men; wagons crosswise in the road; men again dashing for the gutter. I craned my neck to see more and to be sure not to run into trees or houses beyond. Suddenly a ra-ta-ta-ta and a series of whacks like the crack of a whip broke loose. I knew only too well that the bullets were coming very close to crack that way! I *rocked* and swung

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and turned and the rattle died away behind. I found myself trembling with excitement and overawed at being a cold-blooded murderer, but a sense of keen satisfaction came too. It was only the sort of thing our poor doughboys have suffered so often.

It was now respectably light at last; light enough to see plainly the machines which swarmed the air. Now watch out for Huns — but none could I see. Spads, Breguets, Salmsons, Liberties, Letores — were recognized as I passed fairly close. Archie bursts now dotted the glowing skies in a vain endeavor to reach the Allied planes. I sailed back very low until I found our doughboys. In one place they were packed in solid ranks, in another I could see them dotted along the trenches, but it was impossible to see them out in the open. They take advantage of every bit of natural cover, are just the color of the ground, and our own speed is very great. I circled by close to a crowd and waved. Not a motion in return. They either thought I was Boche or were thinking hard of other things! Usually they are very responsive. We often chuck them cigarettes or newspapers which are always received with great enthusiasm! Honestly,

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those boys are wonderful. There is so much to tell about them that I can't do it! But in dull times I shall certainly tell you some of the remarkable stories which I know are true. In one place that morning our doughboys came on a stove with breakfast cooking. They replenished the fire and eagerly devoured the hot Boche food which they said wasn't half bad! A queer sort of compressed malt bread effect and some hot soup.

As I passed our front lines, our balloons loomed up, great gawky sausages, with the first gleams of the sun reflected on their wet sides. They were so close together I didn't dare pass beneath for fear of hitting an unseen cable. It did my heart good to realize that in each of those uncouth craft sat one or two observers regulating our barrage fire and watching the movements of the troops. The homeward trip through our barrage was as stormy as the first, but it was quickly over. All the way home formations of planes kept passing me on the way out. I felt as if we had just won a Yale game! At last it really looks as if we had the supremacy of the air — a statement which we certainly could not make on the Chateau Thierry front.

Since that memorable morning we have been

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constantly busy. Many of our crowd have Boche planes and balloons to their credit. I seem to have no luck at all that way. Every time I miss a patrol because of motor trouble the crowd seem to meet Boches, and if I make a dozen successive patrols nothing at all turns up. A man is judged by the results he shows, not by intentions in the game. My score stands pretty painfully low, and it gives me a pain. I do feel though, that my turn will surely come if I stick to it.

Jove, it's fun to sit round and listen to the stories which the pilots tell at mess time; men who landed in No Man's Land; others just behind the lines, and one who landed in German territory was captured by the Boches only to be retaken an hour later by the advancing Yanks! It's almost like a strange and thrilling dream.

Lu, for goodness' sake be a sport and don't talk about the junk I write in these letters. Just as you say, there are a few thousand other men in the air service all doing the same thing, but a man's family is rather apt to lose sight of that fact!

Good bye, you old sport, with loads of love to Dicky and the kiddoes —

HAM.

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[Rembercourt] Oct. 5, 1918

BLESSED MOTHER,

This is the first instant I have had to write in for a long time. I wrote my usual Sunday letter to Lu this time because I hadn't written her for ages and she has written me constantly. In it I tried to describe a little my impression of the morning of Sept. 26 attack! We have been frightfully busy since then trying to do our utmost to help in the good work. Our group, the first pursuit group (four squadrons), has actually many more victories and fewer casualties than the whole first Wing composed of *three groups!* which is a record we are all proud of.

I must write fast and briefly I am sorry to say, but I know you understand, Mammy. On October 2 I picked up a Halberstadt biplace fighter over the lines. My guns jammed after about fifty rounds, but I kept manœuvering with him to keep him occupied until help arrived. Help *did* arrive in the form of seven more of my companions! We cut the old boy off from his lines and started driving him home. We wanted to drive him back to our aerodrome, but he persisted in trying to escape, and one of the boys growing impatient, put a few incendiaries into

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him and brought him down in flames. All this was *way* back in our lines and I could look down on the roads as we passed over and could see autos stop and people gape open-mouthed as the Boche passed not fifty feet over their heads with eight Spads around, above, and behind him! Strange to say both pilot and observer were practically unhurt in spite of the flames, but naturally they were both taken prisoners immediately.

The next day, Oct. 3, was the most thrilling day of my life so far, and it came within a hair of being my last one. Two of us attacked enemy balloons ten kilometers behind their lines at 4.35 P.M. I hardly had time to think of Archie fire and streams of machine gun bullets that flew by as I dove on my balloon. I could see my incendiaries pour into the old gas bag, and the observer jump out in his parachute. A few seconds later the flames burst out and down it went. My companion, a boy from another squadron, was ahead of me and about to attack another balloon, when I suddenly saw a formation of seven Fokkers above. My heart stood still. He never saw them, Mammy; it was hideous. My shriek of "Look out Walter!" never got beyond my mouth because of the roaring exhaust. In a second they

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were upon him. Just a glimpse of the poor boy in the midst of those devils was all I could catch before the whole mess went circling to the ground. When I reached the spot they were careening around like a flock of buzzards over a freshly killed prey. I was so mad I saw red, and dove upon the nearest of them. He didn't see, so I waited till I was close upon him, then just riddled him with bullets. At this very second I heard that awful whip cracking sound and saw the bullets were also flying by my head. I was completely surrounded, but my situation was so futile that I was strangely cool. I tried to keep head on to my attackers. In a few more seconds they would have had me in such an unequal combat, and I was wondering what sort of a funeral they would give me, when a Spad flashed down from the sky above, and another and another! The protection, six Spads, had arrived. I almost wept for joy — but suddenly realized that the fireworks weren't over yet. For fifteen minutes we milled together, rolling and tumbling — Spad, Fokker, Fokker, Spad — in the wildest, most confused whirling mass I ever hope to see. The air was just streaked in every direction with the smoke of the tracer bullets. We all have little

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photographic impressions of different moments in that fight. I remember looking back once only to see one Fokker on my tail and another from the side shooting streams of bullets at me. A second later it might be entirely different. Things happened too fast and changed too often to enable any of us to retain anything but a confused impression of that awful combat. Gradually we edged towards our lines and finally crossed them with the Fokkers in hot pursuit. They turned back together, however, when we finally did reach the lines. It is unhealthy for them to come over our side of the fence.

Once on our side we drew breath easily again and took count each within himself of the "score." One poor boy, a new pilot in our squadron, was missing and the poor balloon straffer ahead of me was gone. Our leader had got one biplace in flames, I had got a balloon and one of the other boys in the protecting patrol confirmed the fact that the Fokker I had attacked had crashed to the ground.

The day was not over yet, however. After the main bunch had gone home a few of us were still out on the lines. The Boches evidently thought we had *all* gone for they sent an observation plane

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sneaking over to do some quick reconnaissance work. Three of us spotted him almost simultaneously a few kilometers in our lines. We raced at him together and ten seconds later he was in flames. He sailed on a little, about two hundred feet above the ground, then tottered and crashed in a final burst of flames! We all three got credit for his destruction. If all my victories are officially confirmed I shall be an "ace" (5 victories), but *please* don't talk about it, as *official* victories are the only ones that really count and even then there are a few millions of other men in the war all doing just as hard and dangerous work, much of which is never known about or "noised abroad." It's much nicer just to sit tight and be humble and thankful to the Almighty for His great goodness; don't you think so? The feeling I have on looking back on three victories in an hour is not one of triumphant power. It is rather a feeling, stronger than ever, that we mortals are mere specks of dust in the wind, blown about at His pleasure, and I realize as never before, that it was due to no cleverness or bravado on my part that I scored these victories; it was simply His will that I should live through it, and mere chance brought me the successes.

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My poor dear Spad No. 22 is so badly shot up that it will have to be replaced by a horrid new one. It's strange what affection you can develop for an inanimate object, but my old Spad stained with oil and smoke and even cold sweat from my brow was like a trusted horse to me. I have cut off from its side our squadron insignia "Uncle Sam's Hat in the Ring" and the No. 22 just as it was, all dirty and weather beaten, as a revered souvenir of a plane which performed steadily and faithfully for a long time unrewarded, and finally came to a glorious end on the day of victory! I am also sending several pieces of its wing-covering, pierced by Boche bullets, and some of them with remarks written on them. Do keep them carefully, because they will always be interesting to look back upon. . . .

I simply am swamped these days and am utterly unable to write letters. It is a question of just sticking on the job till the nerves go bad or the bad weather brings a needed rest. The work is so thrilling that it is actually sustaining and tiring at the same time!

I got a sudden shock at lunch the other day, and for a minute couldn't think why. Then it suddenly dawned on me that I was eating soup

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from a little bowl with ears just like ours at home, except that it had horrid polka dots instead of the yellow chickens and the lucky one with the house!

Your lovingest HAM.

Sunday, Oct. 13th, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

This is the first Sunday in ages which has seemed like Sunday, and the reason is that a drizzle set in at an early hour this morning, so that when the second flight began the painful process of getting up to make a seven o'clock patrol, they soon discovered that it was unnecessary, and went back to bed for another snooze. Breakfast took place at an "easy nine" as on the best-regulated peace-time Sundays!

I wrote you a short mid-week letter just before we set out on a balloon raid. I might do well to continue where I left off, for the raid, like most of its predecessors, was somewhat eventful. It was a carefully planned affair. Three "strafers" would arrive over the enemy balloon position at a certain minute. Thirty seconds later three groups of about eight planes each would meet over the spot from different points of the com-

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pass to protect the strafers who should have just shot down their balloons. All worked out quite perfectly except that when we arrived on the scene not a single balloon was in sight. I was leading a protective formation this time, and, true to form, the Fokkers came piling down on us a few minutes later. A general "dog-fight" ensued. One of the best pilots in the group found himself face to face with a Fokker. Each opened fire simultaneously and each thought the other would be the one to turn at the last second, but neither did. They crashed head-on and dropped wingless to the ground. It was one of the few times when the Boche didn't yield in a tight place when he was working alone. Another Boche went down in flames and another of our pilots also took the count. My duty was to get my formation home since we were ten kilometers in Heinie's territory where he naturally fought to a great advantage. Gradually we edged towards our lines while the Fokkers, one by one abandoned the fight. Soon we were well on our way to the lines with no Fokkers in pursuit, but suddenly below and behind us I saw a lone Spad with two of them hot "on his tail." I turned so quickly that only one man of our formation saw me.

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The rest continued on while we two circled around, then down, full motor, down on the Fokkers. I noticed that the lone Spad had made good his escape and that the Boches had throttled their motors and turned towards home. All this was at not more than a few thousand feet up. The great speed of the dive carried me quickly up on one of the Huns. I saw that he had not seen me, so I waited till I was only 50 meters away, then opened both guns at his cockpit. In a flash I was past him, but Willie P—— (not Platt) behind me saw him careen over on his side and start rapidly down. Then he opened fire and added what finishing touches might have been necessary. The next thing I knew the Boche's companion was "on my tail" shooting madly. I realized that there were more Fokkers around and that I was still in Boche-land so I didn't stop to give battle, but headed for home, motor wide open, and squirming from side to side to give him as difficult a target as possible. Gradually he fell behind and once more I breathed easily, especially when I saw Willie pull up beside me unhurt likewise. One of our balloon observers is said to have seen the Hun crash, so we stand a good chance of getting confirmation.

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This and one other confirmation are pending — If they come through I will have seven official — and at this second Tom Crocker comes bursting in with the news that the “Kaiser accepts everything,” that he is sending a delegation to decide how he can retreat without getting beaten up in the process! What next, dear Mammy? This peace talk is awfully bad for a fighter, because when a man starts to get “careful” of himself, he stands the best chance of getting killed, or at least of not accomplishing results. So Hammy will forget about it and join those who take the attitude, “Yes, I’ll begin to think about peace when the order comes through to stop fighting.” All I say is that I pity the Boches when our soldiers cut loose in their territory. Mammy, the American doughboy is one of the hardest most relentless specimens in the war, and the Boches have a wholesome respect for them.

By some queer arrangement I have become a Captain! Here’s the way it strikes me. I don’t know any conceivable reason why I should have been made a Captain while our Commanding Officer, a man with eighteen official Boches (the leading American Ace) and admittedly one of the best C. O.’s on the front, remains a lieutenant.

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That puts me in an awkward position to say the least. Also I don't want any position higher than the one I now hold, — that of a flight-commander, where I lead in person my little band of six or eight on their stunts. I'm afraid they will make me a squadron commander or something where I will have to *tell* my men to do things instead of being able to lead them personally. I *don't want* a position of "authority or responsibility" where one sits in a chair. If they will leave me alone a simple pilot and flight leader I won't mind being a captain — *voilà!*

From all over the barracks are coming remarks: — "Are you all packed yet, John?" or "I'm glad I didn't buy that new uniform after all!" It seems so unbelievable and we all know how treacherous those fiends are, that nobody really takes things seriously though the news came in an *official* report.

Well, Mammy, if it *should* be true don't forget to tell dear old Anna to have my tuxedo pressed, my citizen clothes taken out of camphor, and the sewing machine removed from my room!

More anon — I'm thrilled, but dare not really expect anything —

Your loving HAM.

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Sunday, Oct. 13, 1918

DEAR DICKIE,

Lu has been writing such good letters all summer, and from them I have gleaned an idea of your experiences in shipbuilding. I gotta hand it to you, that's all. They tell me, however, that you were marked as an aristocrat and hopeless "swell guy" when you inadvertently disclosed the fact that you frequented Mooney's (is that the right name?) — a restaurant which you described to Lu as comparing favorably with the Ayer Station lunch counter! It honestly must have been a mighty satisfactory experience. Do drop me a line some time or add a P. S. to one of Lu's letters.

Gosh, one doesn't know what to think these days with all this peace scare flying around; in fact they told me this afternoon that orders had been received in the trenches to stop firing. I was able emphatically to contradict that rumor this evening however.

I had counted on a peaceful Sunday at last as a steady drizzle had set in, but no peace for the wicked. At three o'clock they sent down word that someone was needed right away to go out and knock down an enemy balloon which was

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directing embarrassing artillery fire. I found the weather better over the lines and finally located my old sausage. A tricky approach put me in position and as I dove on it I inwardly speculated on whether I was putting more shots in the balloon than they were putting in my plane! From the flickering dots of incendiaries that cracked around me I decided the odds were well in their favor until suddenly a little glow appeared in the top of the balloon and a moment later it burst into flames and descended gracefully to earth. I was still in the air doing my prettiest twisting to evade the various forms of Boche fireworks they were sending up in my honor. On the way home I took a shot at a passing German biplane, but managed things so unskillfully that I found I was the goat (being square in the observer's arc of fire). Uttering a loud "wrong again," I swung hastily away from him only to see at a short distance away and coming straight in my direction a group of eight Fokkers. The Boches had evidently decided that the fireworks were not a fitting mark of recognition for the occasion so they had sent a convoy of their prettiest little planes to escort me home. The speed of a Spad has been a matter of some discussion Dicky, but

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all I say is that I wish the doubters might have seen me on my way home this evening. Honestly it was a funny sensation. After opening the motor wide and holding the head south I knew there was nothing more I could do, so I sat there turned half around in my seat watching those boys and wondering whether or not they could catch me. For a while they gained steadily, because their greater altitude gave them increased speed on the down slope, but after they once got on my level my old ship pulled gradually away from them, and I couldn't resist putting my thumb to my nose when they turned and swung back *chez eux*. The balloon was pretty far in and rather low down so our observers may not have seen it go down, in which case official confirmation will be lacking, but it's one's own satisfaction that counts anyway.

Must get some sleep Dicky, but best luck and loads of love to you —

HAM.

Sanger Hall, Sunday, Oct. 20, 1918

DEAREST MOTHER,

This Sunday's letter comes not from the front but from a station near Paris where I am on a 3-

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day leave. I was awfully glad to get away for a few days of rest and a chance to buy some much-needed clothes and shoes. I intend to skip down to Romorantin to see the dear Normants, but the train service is hopelessly bad and the weather is of the same quality so I cannot accept the kind offer of a plane to fly down in.

This is a huge reception park for planes coming from the factories and going from here to various points on the front. I might explain that "Sanger Hall" is to outward appearances a tar-papered barrack but inside——! You see Capt. Sanger was killed here in an accident, and his wife gave this building in his memory. She worked out the interior arrangements with Paris interior decorators and the result is wonderful. There are two large rooms with a big open fireplace at the end of each. One room has a piano, phonograph, magazine table, and comfortable sofas and chairs covered with a kind of burlap in alternate light and dark blue stripes. The other room is a combined library and writing room also equipped with sumptuous lounge chairs and sofa. The panelling is a light yellow, the curtains emerald green, and at each of the dark stained writing tables are large quill pens in brilliant

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greens, blues and reds. Green shaded reading lamps at each table and large yellow shades are on the lamps of the center table. The floors are carpeted and all the fittings, such as desk pads, ink stands, lamp brackets, paper holders, are of the same kind you find in the Somerset Club. The whole is harmonious (even though my description might not convey that impression) and in good taste. It seems to strike a medium between the ordinary camp rest room and a rather swagger club.

I have run into many old friends, both pilots and men in the Paris office. They treat one *very* well; in fact Maj. — who just brought me out here in his car explained that hereafter pilots who had made a good record on the front might ask for about any kind of plane they wanted. Naturally we have strong preferences for a Spad equipped with certain kinds of motors, but in the ordinary distribution it's pure luck what you get. Also they will equip such a plane with any instruments or equipment the pilot may desire. I didn't have the nerve to ask whether he considered me eligible for this "special" arrangement, but that will probably take care of itself.

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I certainly should like to be able to say, "I want a K—— Spad with a B—— motor in it; two V—— guns instead of the regular M—— guns, a C—— compass instead of the ordinary one, a B—— carburetor with so many jets of such and such a size, etc.——"

The day before I left we had another combat. I was leading our formation when I suddenly discovered we had "cut off" a lone German bi-place from his lines. I started to attack him but both my guns jammed after a single shot from each. The other boys, however, made short work of the Boche. We followed him right down to the ground for he lit in our lines. Neither pilot nor observer seemed to be injured in the crash, but I won't guarantee that our dough-boys didn't eat them alive!

This rest is wonderful. It is such a change to be able to step over to the A. R. C. canteen for hot drinks at tea time, then, once more at Paris, to sleep in a comfortable bed and bathe in hot water in a real tub!

Bestest love, dear Mother, and all the crowd,
Your loving
H.

LETTERS OF AN AMERICAN AIRMAN

Oct. 22, 1918

DEAREST P. A.,

I am just back from a three days' leave quite profitably spent in Paris (buying clothes, shoes, etc., for the winter) and in Romorantin where I had the great pleasure of spending a night at the Normants where Q. and I used to spend such happy week-ends in days gone by. . . .

Returning to my squadron this morning I was delighted to find that my C. O. (the leading American Ace, 19 official Boches) had at last been awarded the D. S. C. with four oak leaves in partial recognition of his work, although they have not yet condescended to give him his well-earned captaincy or majority. He is a remarkable C. O., accompanying his pilots on every mission of importance or danger, and his pilots are therefore willing workers.

This afternoon a disagreeable experience robbed me of what I feel quite sure would have been another victory. During my absence my plane had received harsh treatment at the hands of a rather clumsy friend who damaged it in landing. The mechanics assured me that the injured parts had been replaced with new ones. Foolishly taking their word for it I went out on patrol.

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We soon located a German two-seater and manoeuvred unseen into a very favorable position. I dove to attack with my two comrades close behind me. Suddenly my machine gave a terrible lurch which snapped me against the safety belt. I knew something was wrong and swung off, followed by the other two, leaving the surprised Hun to a peaceful retreat. I babied my ship home and landed safely only to find that my stabilizer had been broken internally, and that the fierce air pressure incurred in the dive had twisted it almost off, making my plane unmanageable until the air pressure lessened. I did some healthy "bawling out" much as I hate to. My mechanics have been very hard and faithful workers, but this seemed a clear case of careless inspection. It was hateful to see that Boche sail home with impunity.

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Oct. 22, 1918

DEAR OLLIE,

We've just been outside watching a show, one of the kind that puts a thrill in things. What kind of a show do you think one would be looking at out of doors at 8:30 P.M.? *Je vais vous dire,*

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mon vieux: — I had just written the heading of this letter when suddenly someone yelled, "Lights out!" Out they went damn quickly. It was soon apparent what the row was all about for a barrage dotted the sky over X — not far away, and the roving beams of the searchlights swung slowly, inquisitively, around in a vain effort to pick up the raider. A few seconds later came a thundering whang! slam! bang! far louder than a barrage, and we knew the old boy had dropped his eggs. Then a different tone of motor told us that our night *chasse* was on the trail. We all stood outside cheering them on. I know not how they could see each other unless the moon was sufficient or a stray searchlight beam accidentally reached the right spot, but anyway the old machine guns opened up. Little dots of fire flashed back and forth and a minute later came the ra ta ta ta. We were rooting hard for our boys but they couldn't seem to land their shots in the right spot. The fitting climax would have been for the Boche to burst into flames and drop — but we had to call the combat a draw, because no one came down. We could see in the far distance still another combat going on. There was some excitement when one of the raiders droned

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right over our field, but he must have been on his way home for he dropped no bombs on us. Our boys are new at this night chase work, but I think soon they will begin knocking down the old Gothas. They certainly work before a good gallery and confirmation for a victory at night would be forthcoming from a few thousand different witnesses.

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Best love,
HAM.



Death is certainly not a black unmentionable thing, and I feel . . . that dead people should be talked of just as if they were alive. At mess and sitting around in our quarters the boys that have been killed are spoken of all the time when any little thing reminds someone of them. To me Quentin is just away somewhere. I know we shall see each other again and have a grand old "boosh," talking over everything together. I miss him the way I miss Mother and the family, for his personality or spirit are just as real and vivid as they ever were.

HAMILTON COOLIDGE

[CITATION FOR GALLANTRY]

UNITED STATES ARMY

U. S. A.

A. E. F.

CITATION

First Lieutenant HAMILTON COOLIDGE, A.S. 94th
Aero Sqdn.

for distinguished and exceptional gallantry
at Bonnes, France on 7 July 1918 in the operations
of the American Expeditionary Forces
In testimony thereof, and as an expression of
appreciation of his valor, I award him this

CITATION

Awarded on 27 March 1919

JOHN J. PERSHING
Commander-in-Chief

[CITATION TO THE FRENCH ARMY ACCOMPANIED BY
AWARD OF CROIX DE GUERRE WITH PALM]

D. M.
GRAND QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL
DES
ARMÉES FRANÇAISES DE L'EST
ÉTAT-MAJOR
BUREAU DU PERSONNEL
(*Décorations*)

ORDRE
N° 12027 "D"
(EXTRAIT)

Après approbation du Général Commandant
en Chef les Forces expéditionnaires Américaines en
France, le Maréchal de France, Commandant en
Chef les Armées Françaises de l'Est, cite à l'Ordre
de l'ARMÉE.

Lieutenant-pilote HAMILTON COOLIDGE,
à l'Escadrille Américaine 94:

"Pilote de grand courage. A abattu en
flammes, le 7 Juillet 1918, un biplace ennemi dans
la Région de GRISOLLES."

Au Grand Quartier Général, le 29 NOVEMBRE 1918
Le Maréchal de France
Commandant en Chef les Armées
Françaises de l'Est
PÉTAIN

Pour Extrait Conforme:
Le Lieutenant-Colonel
Chef du Bureau du Personnel
DAUBIGNY

[AWARD OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS]

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON

IN REPLY

REFER TO 201 Coolidge, Hamilton
(Mis. Div.)

March 10, 1919

Mr. J. R. Coolidge,
10 West Hill Place,
Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

This office has been advised by the Commanding General, American Expeditionary Forces, (cable 1978), that he has awarded the distinguished-service cross posthumously to your son, Captain Hamilton Coolidge, 94th Aero Squadron, for "Extraordinary heroism in action near Grand Pré, France, October 27, 1918. Leading a protection patrol, he went to the assistance of two observation planes which were being attacked by six German machines. Observing this manœuver, the enemy sent up a terrific barrage from anti-aircraft guns on the ground. Disregarding the extreme danger, he dived straight into the barrage and his plane was struck and sent down in flames."

The Quartermaster General of the Army has been directed to have the cross forwarded to you and it is believed that you will receive same in a very short time.

Very truly yours,
(signed) P. C. HARRIS
The Adjutant General
Per: C. M. T.

CMT/EVH

[Faint, illegible text from the reverse side of the page]

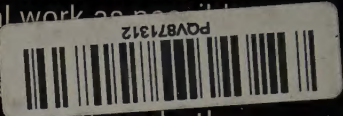


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